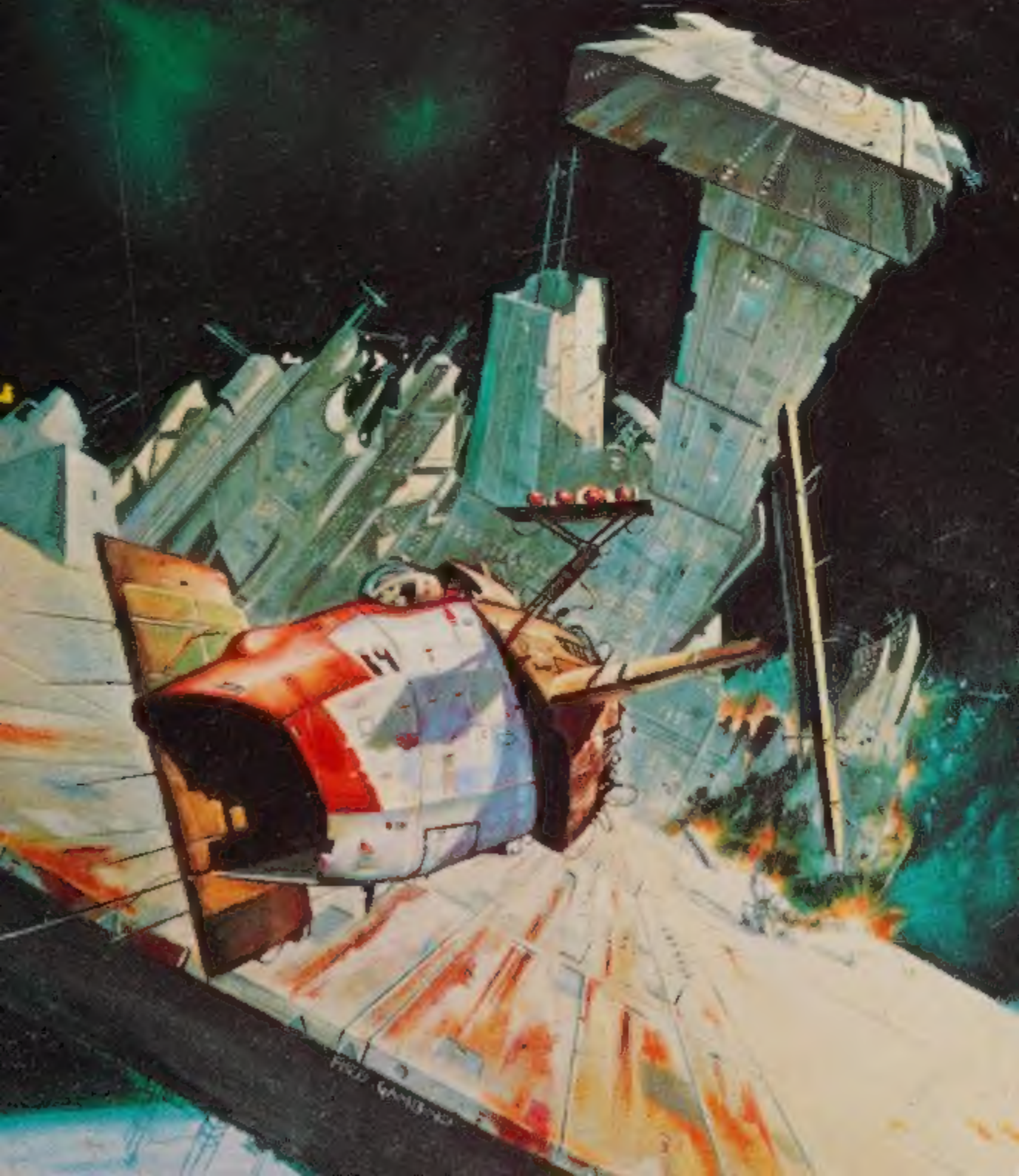
SPHERE SCIENCE FICTION

DANGEROUS VISIONS 2

Edited and introduced by Harlan Ellison

The most honoured SF anthology ever!



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/dangerousvisions0000unse_p3q9

Harlan Ellison, the most outrageous and exciting talent in sf today, has compiled this dazzling anthology of stories especially written for *Dangerous Visions*. Winner of two Nebula awards and two Hugo awards, it is a landmark in speculative fiction.

Dangerous Visions "is a gigantic, shapeless, exuberant, and startling collection . . . vital, meaningful stories which probably could not have been published in the sf magazines—not because of their daring ideas, but because of their literary quality".. .. ..
—Damon Knight, *Saturday Review*

Also available from Sphere Books

DANGEROUS VISIONS 1
DANGEROUS VISIONS 3

Dangerous Visions 2

Edited and with a new introduction by Harlan Ellison

Illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon

SPHERE BOOKS LIMITED
30/32 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8JL

First published in Great Britain (in two volumes) by
David, Bruce & Watson Ltd 1970 and 1971
Copyright © Harlan Ellison 1967, 1969
Published by Sphere Books (in three volumes) 1974

TRADE
MARK

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Set in Intertype Baskerville

Printed in Great Britain by
Cox & Wyman Ltd
London, Reading and Fakenham

ISBN 0 7221 3301 4

Men learn from other men what they know of themselves, of the world in which they *must* live, and of the world in which they would *like* to live.

This book is dedicated with love, respect and admiration
to Leo & Diane Dillon
who painstakingly, out of friendship,
showed the editor that black is black, white is white, and that goodness can come from either; but never from gray.
And to their son, Lionel III
with a silent prayer that *his*
world will not resemble *our* world.

CONTENTS

NEW INTRODUCTION
Harlan Ellison 9

THE MAN WHO WENT TO THE MOON—TWICE *Howard Rodman* 13

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS
Philip K. Dick 29

THE JIGSAW MAN
Larry Niven 71

GONNA ROLL THE BONES
Fritz Leiber 89

LORD RANDY, MY SON
Joe L. Hensley 119

EUTOPIA
Poul Anderson 139

INCIDENT IN MODERAN
David R. Bunch 169

THE ESCAPING
David R. Bunch 174

THE DOLL-HOUSE
James Cross 181

SEX AND/OR MR. MORRISON
Carol Emshwiller 209

SHALL THE DUST PRAISE THEE?
Damon Knight 225

INTRODUCTION TO THIS EDITION

In November 1967, the introductory lines I'd written for *Dangerous Visions* in the January of that year began to be read throughout the science-fiction world. Sitting in Terry Carr's apartment in Brooklyn Heights that January, backed against the wall with the final deadline for copy, I began my general introduction to the book it had taken me two years to construct.

"What you hold in your hands is more than a book. If we are lucky, it is a revolution."

Now it is a year and a half later. As of March 12th, 1969, *Dangerous Visions* has sold over sixty thousand copies in combined trade edition and book club release. It has won for its various authors a fistful of Nebula and Hugo awards, and even a special citation from the 26th World Science Fiction Convention. (That citation, incidentally, reads as follows: "To Harlan Ellison, Editor of 'Dangerous Visions,' the Most Significant and Controversial SF Book Published in 1967.")

Now how about that, dreamers of the dream? Maybe there is a God after all. These thirty-five writers and artists and editors set out to put together the most significant and controversial book of the year, and by dingies they seemed to have done it.

On the other hand, if *Dangerous Visions* was such a breakthrough, why are there so many people who denigrate it? Why did librarians throughout the country refuse to stock it on their shelves? Why did the ex-editor of the SF Book Club get thousands of returned copies, with incensed letters from mommies, scoutmasters, teachers and clergy demanding to know why their kids' precious bodily fluids had been polluted with this cesspool volume? Why has there

sprung up a counter-revolutionary movement in the genre backed by something named John Jeremy Pierce, dedicated to pursuing a "holy war," the goal of which is eradicating *Dangerous Visions* and books like it? Why, at symposiums from Berkeley to the Bronx, have critics railed and cursed this book? Why did one esteemed critic take it upon herself to name *Dangerous Visions* the bible of something she calls "The New Wave", and then spend pages informing her readers how detestable it was?

And on the other hand (this being the world of science fiction, we can have as many appendages as we choose), why did one newspaper reviewer say, "*Dangerous Visions* is one of the best anthologies in the genre to be published in the last decade. And I rather imagine that it will stand unchallenged for a good long while"? Why does almost every author who appeared in the book speak with pride of his contribution to the project? Why did your humble editor receive over three thousand letters about the book ranging from this one, from a Mrs. S. Blittmon of Philadelphia:

> Dear Mr. Ellison,
>
> When I picked up your book "Dangerous Visions" at the library & read the 2 introductions, I thought it was going to be great. I cannot tell you how sick I feel after reading [and she named two stories]. You say you had a Jewish grandmother (so did I) but I think not; she must have been Viet Cong, otherwise how could you think of such atrocities. Shame, shame on you! Science fiction should be beautiful. With your mind (?) you should be cleaning latrines & that's too nice. Sincerely . . .

to this one, from Monte Davis of New York City:

> Dear Mr. Ellison:
>
> Hoo-boy!!! And lots of similar exclamations which I will leave to your (doubtless fecund) imagination, all of which are intended to convey the idea that "Dangerous Visions" is one hell of a book. Leaving aside for the mo-

ment that ugly idea about the "new thing," your green-jacketed beast is simply the most wildly entertaining thing I have encountered in many months. To one (like me) starved by the paucity of any sort of literary or intellectual freshness in the magazines, and the painfully small supply of readable new books, it came as a complete and total mind-fucker . . .

It went on and on like that, and now, a year and a half later, it still hasn't stopped. Entire issues of fan magazines have been devoted to this book; professional editors have literally gotten into feuds with their contributors over stories too-*Dangerous Visions*-like; entire careers of Big Name Writers have been altered by their work in the book; careers have been resuscitated and in one instance a career was throttled in its crib. But the changes in the science fiction field that seem to have stemmed from the publication of *Dangerous Visions* are even more striking.

The book opened the door with its popularity and controversy for a spate of "original" anthologies, intended to circumvent the narrow-thinking of much magazine science fiction editing. While Damon Knight's *Orbit* series began before *Dangerous Visions* was released, I do not think Damon will pillory me for stealing his thunder when I opine that *Dangerous Visions* has made the market for his series larger, unlocked the thinking of many writers, and in many ways battered down the barricades for more unfettered writing, much of which he is now publishing in *his* anthologies. Harry Harrison's new *Nova* collection of originals follows the pattern set by *Dangerous Visions*. Joe Elder's *The Farthest Reaches* and Anne McCaffrey's *Alchemy & Academe* are two more "original" collections that might well have foundered had it not been for *Dangerous Visions*.

The advance monies writers now get, as a result of the trailblazing chunk grabbed off by *Dangerous Visions* in both hardcover and paperback editions, has doubled and tripled.

But most important, we have damned well gotten that

revolution. If you doubt it, just say "new wave" to Sam Moskowitz. If you doubt it, just suggest to Fred Pohl that he publish an all-New Wave issue of *Galaxy*. And sit in on the panel discussions at a science fiction convention: there are still the worthwhile and interesting discussions of "the red shift as source-material for astronomical sf stories", but now—in addition—you hear learned treatises on Science Fiction as the Literature of Revolution, How To Write the Kinetic Mixed-Media SF Novel, Parallels of Symbolism in James Joyce and Philip José Farmer, Taboos in Magazine-Published Science Fiction. Everyone is talking all at once, and the dialogue has made this the most exciting period in the history of science fiction. The critics and the academicians have found that this lowly "fiction of the people" has some legitimate aspirations to greatness, that the men who have devoted their lives to this kind of writing are in most ways equal to the turks lauded on the *New York Times* best-seller list.

And while it is perilous to make conclusions about the effect *Dangerous Visions* has had on the field as a whole, or its lasting impact, it is safe at least to remark on the furor the book has caused, fulfilling its intent: mind-blasting.

In this brief introduction to the second paperback volume of the *Dangerous Visions* reprint, I've tried to bring you up to date on what has happened since its hardcover publication. In Volume Three I'll tell you about the companion volume currently in the works, and how many of the writers in this first triad-volume have been affected by what they did in *Dangerous Visions*.

But right now, you are about to visit with ten men and women who—whether it was in terms of blasphemy or gentleness or black humor dared to dream their own special dangerous visions. You can't help but enjoy.

I'll see you in the next volume. Stick around.

HARLAN ELLISON
Los Angeles
16 March 69

THE MAN WHO WENT TO THE MOON—TWICE

Introduction to

THE MAN WHO WENT TO THE MOON—TWICE

Originally, one of the lesser (but no less important) intents of this anthology was to commission and bring to the attention of the readers stories by writers well outside the field of speculative fiction. The names William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Alan Sillitoe, Terry Southern, Thomas Berger and Kingsley Amis were listed in my preliminary table of contents. The name Howard Rodman was also listed. Circumstances almost Machiavellian in nature prevented the appearance here of the former sextet. Howard Rodman is with us. I am honored.

You are a fan of Rodman's work if you watch television at all. Because, if you watch TV in even the most peripheral way, you do it to catch the best programs, and if that is the case you have seen Rodman's work. (A comment: how odd it seems to me that science fiction fans, the ones who choose to exist in dream worlds of flying skyways, cities of wonder, marvelous inventions, dilating doors, tri-vid and "feelies," are the ones who most vocally despise modern television. The bulk of the fans I have met, when they discover I spend part of my time writing for the visual media, rather superciliously tell me they seldom watch, as though watching *at all* might be considered gauche. How sad it must be for them, to see television, space travel and all the other predictions of Gernsbackian "scientification" turned over to the Philistines. I suppose, in a way, it's a small tragedy, like having been so hip for years that you knew Tolkien was great, and now suddenly finding every *shmendrick* in the world reading paperback editions of *Lord of the Rings* on the IRT. But it is a far, far better thing, I submit, to have TV as the mass media it is, even as gawdawful as it is ninety-

six per cent of the time, than to relegate it to the hideously antiseptic fate intended for it by the s-f of 1928.)

Howard Rodman has been nominated for and won more awards for television drama than anyone currently working in the medium. His famous *Naked City* script, "Bringing Far Places Together", won Emmys and Writers' Guild awards not only for himself but for the series, the director and the stars. Students of exemplary teleplays will recall last season's *Bob Hope-Chrysler Theater* drama, "The Game with Glass Pieces". It was, in point of fact, Howard Rodman's style that set the tone for the best of both *Naked City* and Route 66 during their auspicious tenures on the channelways.

Howard Rodman was born in the Bronx, and decided at the age of ten to be a writer. He took that decision seriously at age fifteen and from fifteen to sixteen read a minimum of one volume of short stories daily; from sixteen to seventeen read only plays, five or six a day; and from seventeen to twenty-one he wrote 3000 words a day: short stories, scenes from plays, poems, narrative sequences, etc. He graduated from Brooklyn College and later did his graduate work at Iowa University. At twenty-one he went into the army (where among his assignments he was required to inspect the brothels of Lille as a sergeant in counterintelligence). He has had over a hundred and fifty short stories published, several hundred poems, forty one-act plays, four three-act plays (and has been included in volumes of best plays of the year). For the past ten years he has been active in radio, television and motion pictures. At forty-seven, Howard Rodman—big, hearty, incredibly witty and erudite Howard Rodman—the film buff, has been married, divorced and remarried to the lovely and talented actress Norma Connolly. They have four children, several of whom can be ranked as geniuses by the most stringent criteria.

I am particularly pleased that Howard is able to appear in this anthology, not merely because his story is something very different and very special from the others in this book, but for a number of secondary reasons, herewith noted: Long

before I came to Hollywood, I was an admirer of Rodman's scripts. They seemed to me to embody the ideals a scenarist should strive for in a medium dedicated to drumming stench-deterrents for the hair, mouth, underarms and spaces between the toes. I made it a point to meet Rodman, within the first few months in Clown Town, and from him I learned an important lesson. A lesson any writer can use. Don't be afraid. That simple; don't let them scare you. There's nothing they can do to you. If they kick you out of films, do TV. If they kick you out of TV, write novels. If they won't buy your novels, sell short stories. Can't do that, then take a job as a bricklayer. A writer always writes. That's what he's for. And if they won't let you write one kind of thing, if they chop you off at the pockets in the market place, then go to another market place. And if they close off all the bazaars, then by God go and work with your hands till you *can* write, because the talent is always there. But the first time you say, "Oh, Christ, they'll kill me!" then you're done. Because the chief commodity a writer has to sell is his courage. And if he has none, he is more than a coward. He is a sellout and a fink and a heretic, because writing is a holy chore. *That* is what I learned from Howard Rodman.

Another reason for my delight at Rodman's inclusion among these pages is the tenor of the story he has told. It is a gentle story, seemingly commonplace and not very "dangerous". Yet when I first read it, and these thoughts occurred to me, I paused with the warning *read it again* signaling me from inside. Rodman is devious. So I read it again, and aside from the understatement of the handling, the pain of the concept struck me. He has attempted something very difficult, and in its own way unsettling. He has made a sage comment on the same subject which *I* commented upon, in the second paragraph of this introduction. (The part in parentheses.) It is the kind of story Heinlein used to write, and which Vonnegut has done several times, but which *most* speculative writers would not even consider. They are too far away in space. Rodman still has substantial ties with the here and now. And it is this concern (and affection) for the

tragedy of the here and now that has prompted the story of the man who went to the moon twice.

One final reason why Rodman's appearance here is a delight. He is a fighter, not merely a parlor liberal. His admonition to me never to be afraid was capped with an order to fight for what I had written. I've tried to do it, sometimes successfully. It's difficult in Hollywood. But my mentor, Howard Rodman, is the man who once threw a heavy ashtray at a man who had aborted one of his scripts, and had to be restrained from tearing the man's head from his shoulders. On another occasion he sent a very powerful producer, who had butchered one of his cows, a large package wrapped in black crêpe. Inside was a pair of scissors with a note that said *Requiescat in Pace,* and the name of the teleplay. There is a legend around the studios: if you aren't getting enough of a headache from Ellison writing for you, call in Rodman and work with the original item.

It is visible testimony to the quality of his work that Howard Rodman is one of the busiest writers in Hollywood.

THE MAN WHO WENT TO THE MOON—TWICE

by Howard Rodman

The first time Marshall Kiss went to the moon, he was nine years old, and the trip was accidental. A captive balloon broke loose at the county fair, and away it went, with Marhsall in it.

It never came down till twelve hours later.

"Where've you been?" Marshall's pa asked.

"Up to the moon," Marshall answered.

"You don't say," Pa said, with his mouth slightly open and hanging. And off he went to tell the neighbors.

Marshall's ma, being of a more practical turn of mind, just put a heaping bowl of good hot cereal on the table in front of

Marshall. "You must be good and hungry after a trip like that. You better have some supper before you go to bed."

"I guess I will," said Marshall, setting to work to clear out the bowl. He was hard at work, when the reporters came—a big man with a little mustache, and a dry young man working on the newspaper for his tuition at the Undertakers' College.

"Well," said the mustache, "so you've been to the moon."

Marshall got timid and nodded without speaking.

The undertaker smirked, but he stopped that when Marshall's ma threw him a hot glare.

"What was it like?" the mustache asked.

"Very nice," Marshall answered politely. "Cold and fresh and lots of singing."

"What sort of singing?"

"Just singing. Nice tunes."

The undertaker leered, but he stopped that when Marshall's ma set the glass of milk down on the table with a bang and a scowl.

"Nice tunes," Marshall repeated. "Just like church hymns."

Three neighbors came by to take a look at Marshall. They stood back from the table a ways, gaping a little at the boy who'd been to the moon. "Who'd believe it" one of them whispered. "He looks so young."

Marshall blushed with pride and ducked his head down towards his bowl of cereal.

Just then four schoolmates sneaked through the kitchen door and pushed their faces into the spaces between the neighbors. "Ask him!" the smallest schoolmate demanded.

"Hey, Marsh," the bravest one called out, "you gonna play ball tomorrow?"

"Sure," Marshall answered.

"He's all right," the bravest one told the others. "It ain't changed him at all."

Marshall's pa came back with two more neighbors, and a woman brought her husband and eight children from two

and a half miles down the road. A horse poked his head through the kitchen window, and a chicken hopped in and hid under the stove.

Marshall's teacher rang the front doorbell, marched through the house into the kitchen by herself, when no one answered her ring.

Everybody looked at Marshall in a joyful and prideful sort of way, but nobody seemed to be able to think of anything to say. Even when the Mayor arrived, freshly shaven and bursting to make a speech, something happened to him, and he closed his mouth without a word.

The kitchen got warm with so many people pressing in together, but it was a pleasant sort of warmth—cheerful and happy, and nobody jostled anybody else. Marshall's ma just grinned and glowed, and his pa puffed up on a corncob pipe, settling himself on an upturned crate beside the stove.

The reporter who was studying for the profession of undertaking started to ask Marshall, "How do you know you been to the moon?" But that was as far as he got, and somehow he found himself at the back of the crowd, looking out over everybody's head by standing on tiptoe.

Finally the chicken *cut-cutted*, and everybody thought that was funny, so they all laughed out loud, and clear.

Marshall finished his cereal and his milk, and looked up to see, through the window, that the yard outside was packed with people too: for miles around, by horse and buckboard, on foot and otherwise. He could see that they were waiting for word from him, so he stood up and made a speech.

"I never intended deliberately to go to the moon," Marshall stated. "It just happened that way. The balloon kept going up and I kept going up with it. Pretty soon I was looking down on the tops of mountains, and that was something. But I just kept on going up and up anyway. On the way I got an eagle mad. He was trying to fly as high as me, but he just couldn't do it. He was hopping mad, that eagle. Screamed his head off."

All the people in the kitchen, and outside in the yard too, nodded approval.

"In the end," Marshall went on, "I got to the moon. Like I said, it was pretty nice." He stopped speeching, because he'd said everything he had to.

"Was you scared?" somebody asked.

"Somewhat," Marshall answered. "But the air was bracing, and I got over it."

"Well," said the mayor, bound to say something, "we're glad to have you back." And he stuck out his hand to shake with Marshall.

After that, Marshall shook hands all around and everybody went back to his own home. The horse took his head out the window and went back to cropping grass in the yard. The hen hopped out the door again, leaving an egg behind under the stove. The house was empty but still cheerful. It was as if everybody had come and brought their happiness and left it behind as a present, the way the chicken left the egg.

"Been a big day for you," Marshall's pa said.

"I guess you'd better go to bed now," Marshall's ma said.

"Might be," Marshall's pa went on, talking his thinking out loud, "might be you'll turn out to be a big explorer, time to come."

Marshall looked at his ma, saw her fear that the boy would turn out to be a gadabout. He answered for his mother's benefit. "I'll tell you, Pa. Seems more likely I'd just settle down now and stay put." Of course he winked at his father to show him that maybe he was right at that.

"Good night, Pa. Good night, Ma."

"Good night, son."

His ma kissed him good night.

Then Marshall went into his room, closed the door, and undressed, and put on his pajamas. He knelt by the side of his bed and folded his fingers for prayer.

"Been a happy day, O Lord. Happy as I can remember. Thanks."

He climbed into bed and went to sleep.

Well, you know the way time goes on. Marshall came to be

a man, married and settled. He had children, and his children had children. His children grew up and just naturally went off their own ways, and his wife died a natural death. And there was Marshall Kiss left alone in the world, living on his farm and doing as much or as little work as he felt like.

Sometimes he went into town and sat by the stove in the general store and talked, and sometimes he stayed home and listened to the rain talking to the windowpanes. There came to be a time when Marshall was pushing ninety pretty hard. Most everybody who'd been alive when he was a boy had passed on.

The people in town were a new generation, and while they weren't unkind, they weren't very friendly, either. That's the way it is with a new generation—it doesn't look back—it keeps looking forward.

The time came when Marshall could walk through the town from one end to the other and not see a face he knew or that knew him. He'd nod and get nodded back at, but it wasn't a real, close, human thing—it was just a polite thing to do. And you know what the end is, when a man has to live like that—he gets lonely.

That's just what Marshall did—he got lonely.

First he thought he could forget his loneliness by staying off by himself. And there was a whole month when Marshall never showed his face around at all, expecting that somebody might show some curiosity and maybe come by to see how he was. But nobody ever did. So Marshall went back into town.

The clerk at the store seemed to have some vague recollection about not having seen Marshall, but he wasn't too sure. "You haven't been around for a couple of days or so, have you?" he asked Marshall.

"More like a month," Marshall said.

"You don't say," the clerk remarked, as he toted up the figures on Marshall's bill.

"Been away," said Marshall.

"Seeing relatives?" the clerk asked.

"Been to the moon," Marshall said.

The clerk looked a little bored, and not at all interested, and not at all impressed. In fact, he didn't look as if he believed Marshall to begin with. But he was a polite man, so he commented. "Must be a nice trip," he commented, never thinking any more about it than that.

Marshall went stomping out of the store and down to have his hair trimmed.

"Pretty heavy growth, Mr. Kiss," the barber said.

"Should be," Marshall answered. "There ain't no barbershops on the moon, you know."

"Expect not," the barber said, and went ahead, busily clicking his shears and making believe he was clipping a hair here and a hair there, but never saying another word about the moon, never even having the common decency to ask what it was like on the moon.

So Marshall fell asleep till the barber should be finished.

The mayor came in for his daily shave. He was a young man with a heavy beard, and he glanced casually at Marshall. "Old-timer," he said to the barber.

The barber nodded as he worked.

"Looks tuckered out," the mayor said.

"Should be," the barber told him. "He just got back from the moon." He snickered loud.

"You don't say," the mayor said.

"That's what he claims." The barber snickered again. "Just got back from the moon."

"Well, no wonder he's tired, then." But the way the mayor laughed and the way the barber laughed, Marshall could tell that they were just making fun of him. For Marshall wasn't really sleeping, of course.

It got Marshall mad, and he sprang up and threw the sheet off of him and stomped on down to the newspaper office.

"My name is Marshall Kiss." Marshall said to the fresh cub at the desk, "and I've just come back from a trip to the moon!"

"Thanks for the tip, Pop," the reporter said, smiling a little crookedly. "I'll look into it when I get the time." And, saying that, he planted his big feet plump on the desk and clasped his hands behind his head.

Tears sprang up in Marshall's eyes. "I been to the moon twice," he shouted. "Once when I was nine years old, and it's been printed in your paper, too, at the time. Why, people came from twelve miles around just to look at me. I went up there in an old balloon and busted an eagle's heart when he tried to get up as high as I was." He looked at the reporter hard, and he could see that the reporter didn't believe him and wasn't going to try. "There's no pity left in the world any more," said Marshall, "and no joy." And with that, he walked out.

The road home was mostly rocky and uphill, and it seemed to take Marshall a long time to walk a short distance. "Can't figure out how people changed so much," Marshall thought. "Grass is still green, and horses have tails, and hens lay eggs—" He was interrupted by a little boy who came running up from behind, pretending to gallop and hitting himself on the rump as if he were a horse.

"Hello," the little boy said, "where are you going?"

"Just up the hill a way, back to my farm," Marshall answered.

"Where've you been?" the little boy asked.

"Just to town," Marshall said.

"Is that all?" the little boy asked, disappointed. "Ain't you never been nowhere else?"

"I been to the moon," Marshall said, a little timidly.

The boy's eyes opened and shone brightly.

"Twice," Marshall added.

The boy's eyes opened even wider. "How do you like that!" the little boy shouted, excited. "H-h-how do you like that?" He was so excited, he stammered.

"Matter of fact," Marshall said, "I just come back from the moon."

The little boy was silent for a second. "Say, mister," he asked finally, "do you mind if I bring my friend to see you?"

"Not at all. I live right back there, in that house you see." Marshall turned off to get to his house.

"I'll be right back," the little boy promised and ran away as fast as he could to get his friend.

It must have been about half an hour later that the little boy and the little girl got to Marshall's house. They knocked on the door, but there wasn't any answer, so they just walked in. "It's all right," the little boy said, "he's very friendly."

The kitchen was empty, so they looked in the parlor, and that was empty too.

"Maybe he's gone back to the moon," the little girl whispered, awed.

"Maybe he has," the little boy admitted, but just the same they looked in the bedroom.

There was Marshall, lying on the bed, and at first they thought he was sleeping. But after a while, when he didn't move or breathe, the little boy and the little girl knew he was further away than that.

"Guess you were right," the little boy said.

He and the little girl just looked and looked with their eyes as wide as wide can be, at the man who had been to the moon twice.

"I guess this makes three times now," the little girl said.

And suddenly, without knowing why, they became frightened and ran off, leaving the door opened behind them. They ran silently, hand in hand, frightened, but happy too, as if something very wonderful had happened that they couldn't understand.

After a while, though it was the first time it had ever happened on that farm, the horse wandered into the house and stuck his head through the bedroom door and looked.

And then a chicken hopped in and hid under the bed.

And a long time later, a lot of people came to look at the contented smile on Marshall's face.

"That's him," the little boy said, pointing. "That's the man who's been to the moon twice."

And somehow, with Marshall's smile, and the horse standing there swishing his tail, and the sudden *cut-cutt* of the

chicken under the bed—somehow, nobody corrected the little boy.

That was the day the Mars rocket went on a regular three-a-day schedule. Hardly anybody went to the moon at all, any more. There wasn't enough to see.

Afterword:

This particular story came out of a sudden, strongly personal understanding of certain aspects of my father's life—the enormous changes which took place in the history of his time: technological developments beyond dreaming when he was a boy.

He had told me of sitting and listening to a phonograph which was carried on the back of a man who went from village to village in Poland, where my father was born. For a kopek the man wound the handle, the disc turned, the needle scratched, and if you put your ear close to the horn there was the miracle of a voice, a music, a recitation.

Now, in 1928 or '29, my father stepped into an airplane which landed in a cornfield in the Catskill Mountains. For five dollars my father flew for five minutes.

If this was my father's story, it was the story of his generation. Within what seems to me an incredibly short time, the mystery and the miracle were lost. There is small marvel to television, despite the fact that the extraordinary complexity of the sending and reception of a television signal is beyond the understanding and capability of the tens and hundreds of millions of television watchers. The television set is successful *because* the marvel has been eliminated. *Because* the set is truly an idiot box; not so much in its content as in the manner in which the controls have been simplified, so that the viewing may be had by anyone with the sense to push a button and twist a dial. The dial itself, so devised that one has merely to twist it: not even to a specific number. But, ipso facto, if one wants to see the show on channel 8, all one has to do is keep twisting the dial until that show appears on the screen. Ergo, one has dialed to channel 8.

And the marvel is gone.

Because the sweep of modern history seems to me to have a feeling of wonder; because it has a sense of fairy tale and unbelievability to me; because the miracle of the changes wrought from the time of my father's boyhood to my own seemed to me to have been lost, I wrote this story.

It is simply a reminder that fantasy lies in the day-to-day of our lives as much as it lies in the wonder of the future. And it is a reminder that the best of our civilization goes far beyond the comprehension of the ordinary of our citizens. The wonder is that there is so much civilization when so few are civilized.

In another mood I might have written a sharper story. But this time I thought simply that form should follow content. Hence, a fairy tale; old-fashioned and sentimental, written on an electric typewriter.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Introduction to

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS:

There was no doubt about it. If the book was to approach new concepts and taboo subjects, stories that would be difficult to sell to mass market magazines or more particularly the insulated specialist magazines of the science fiction field, it had to get the writers who were not afraid to walk into the dark. Philip K. Dick has been lighting up his own landscape for years, casting illumination by the klieg lights of his imagination on a terra incognita of staggering dimensions. I asked for Phil Dick and got him. A story to be written about, and under the influence of (if possible), LSD. What follows, like his excellent offbeat novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* is the result of such a hallucinogenic journey.

Dick has the uncomfortable habit of shaking up one's theories. For instance, mine own about the value of artificial stimuli to encourage the creative process. (It's a cop-out on my part, I suppose, because I am unable to write without music blasting away in the background. Matters not if it's Honegger or the Tijuana Brass or Archie Shepp or the New Vaudeville Band doing "Winchester Cathedral". I must have it.) When I was a lot younger, and was making the rounds of the various jazz clubs in New York, both as critic and reviewer and plain listener, I became tight with many musicians who swore they needed either weed or speed to get into the proper bag. Then, after fixing or getting high, they settled down to blow; what emerged was lunacy. I've known ballerinas who were grassheads because they couldn't get the "in the air" feeling without their nickel bag; psychiatrists who were able to support their own habits with self-signed narcotics prescriptions habits they had built on the delusion that junk freed their minds for more penetrating analyses;

artists who were on acid constantly, whose work under the "mind-expanding" influences were something you'd scour out with Comet if you found it at the bottom of your wading pool. My theory, developed over years of seeing people deluding themselves for the bounce they got, was that the creative process is at its most lively when it merges clean and unfogged from whatever wells exist within the minds of the creators. Philip K. Dick puts the lie to that theory.

His experiments with LSD and other hallucinogens, plus stimulants of the amphetamine class, have borne such fruit as the story you are about to read, in every way a "dangerous" vision. The question now poses itself: how valid is the totality for the exception of rare successes like the work of Phil Dick? I don't presume to know. All I can venture is that proper administration of mind-expanding drugs might open whole new areas to the creative intellect. Areas that have been, till now, the country of the blind.

For the record, Philip K. Dick attended the University of California, has kicked around in various jobs which included running a record shop (he is a Bach, Wagner and Buddy Greco buff), advertising copy writing and emcee-ing a classical music program on station KSMO in San Mateo, California. Among his books are *Solar Lottery, Eye in the Sky, Time Out of Joint, The Simulacra, The Penultimate Truth, Martian Time-Slip, Dr. Bloodmoney, Now Wait for Last Year* and the 1963 Hugo winner *The Man in the High Castle*. Although portly, bearded and married, he is a confirmed girl-watcher.

He is with us today in his capacity of shaker-upper of theories. And if he doesn't nibble away at your sense of "reality" just a little bit in "Faith of Our Fathers", check your pulse. You may be dead.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

by Philip K. Dick

On the streets of Hanoi he found himself facing a legless peddler who rode a little wooden cart and called shrilly to every passer-by. Chien slowed, listened, but did not stop; business at the Ministry of Cultural Artifacts cropped into his mind and deflected his attention: it was as if he were alone, and none of those on bicycles and scooters and jet-powered motorcycles remained. And likewise it was as if the legless peddler did not exist.

"Comrade," the peddler called however, and pursued him on his cart; a helium battery operated the drive and sent the cart scuttling expertly after Chien. "I possess a wide spectrum of time-tested herbal remedies complete with testimonials from thousands of loyal users; advise me of your malady and I can assist."

Chien, pausing, said, "Yes, but I have no malady." Except, he thought, for the chronic one of those employed by the Central Committee, that of career opportunism testing constantly the gates of each official position. Including mine.

"I can cure for example radiation sickness," the peddler chanted, still pursuing him. "Or expand, if necessary, the element of sexual prowess. I can reverse carcinomatous progressions, even the dreaded melanomae, what you would call black cancers." Lifting a tray of bottles, small aluminum cans and assorted powders in plastic jars, the peddler sang, "If a rival persists in trying to usurp your gainful bureaucratic position, I can purvey an ointment which, appearing as a dermal balm, is in actuality a desperately effective toxin. And my prices, comrade, are low. And as a special favor to one so distinguished in bearing as yourself I will accept the postwar inflationary paper dollars reputedly of international exchange but in reality damn near no better than bathroom tissue."

"Go to hell," Chien said, and signaled a passing hover-car

taxi; he was already three and one half minutes late for his first appointment of the day, and his various fat-assed superiors at the Ministry would be making quick mental notations—as would, to an even greater degree, his subordinates.

The peddler said quietly, "But, comrade; you *must* buy from me."

"Why?" Chien demanded. Indignation.

"Because, comrade, I am a war veteran. I fought in the Colossal Final War of National Liberation with the People's Democratic United Front against the Imperialists; I lost my pedal extremities at the battle of San Francisco." His tone was triumphant, now, and sly "*It is the law.* If you refuse to buy wares offered by a veteran you risk a fine and possible jail sentence—and in addition disgrace."

Wearily, Chien nodded the hovercab on. "Admittedly," he said. "Okay, I must buy from you." He glanced summarily over the meager display of herbal remedies, seeking one at random. "That," he decided, pointing to a paper-wrapped parcel in the rear row.

The peddler laughed. "That, comrade, is a spermatocide, bought by women who for political reasons cannot qualify for The Pill. It would be of shallow use to you, in fact none at all, since you are a gentleman."

"The law," Chien said bitingly, "does not require me to purchase anything useful from you; only that I purchase something. I'll take that." He reached into his padded coat for his billfold, huge with the postwar inflationary bills in which, four times a week, he as a government servant was paid.

"Tell me your problems," the peddler said.

Chien stared at him. Appalled by the invasion of privacy –and done by someone outside the government.

"All right, comrade," the peddler said, seeing his expression. "I will not probe; excuse me. But as a doctor—an herbal healer—it is fitting that I know as much as possible." He pondered, his gaunt features somber. "Do you watch television unusually much?" he asked abruptly.

Taken by surprise, Chien said, "Every evening. Except on Friday when I go to my club to practice the esoteric imported art from the defeated West of steer-roping." It was his only indulgence; other than that he had totally devoted himself to Party activities.

The peddler reached, selected a gray paper packet. "Sixty trade dollars," he stated. "With a full guarantee; if it does not do as promised, return the unused portion for a full and cheery refund."

"And what," Chien said cuttingly, "is it guaranteed to do?"

"It will rest eyes fatigued by the countenance of meaningless official monologues," the peddler said. "A soothing preparation; take it as soon as you find yourself exposed to the usual dry and lengthy sermons which "

Chien paid the money, accepted the packet, and strode off. Balls, he said to himself. It's a racket, he decided, the ordinance setting up war vets as a privileged class. They prey off us—we, the younger ones—like raptors.

Forgotten, the gray packet remained deposited in his coat pocket, as he entered the imposing Postwar Ministry of Cultural Artifacts building, and his own considerable stately office, to begin his workday.

A portly, middle-aged Caucasian male, wearing a brown Hong Kong silk suit, double-breasted with vest, waited in his office. With the unfamiliar Caucasian stood his own immediate superior, Ssu-Ma Tso-pin. Tso-pin introduced the two of them in Cantonese, a dialect which he used badly.

"Mr. Tung Chien, this is Mr. Darius Pethel. Mr. Pethel will be headmaster at the new ideological and cultural establishment of didactic character soon to open at San Fernando, California." He added, "Mr. Pethel has had a rich and full lifetime supporting the people's struggle to unseat imperialist-bloc countries via pedagogic media; therefore this high post."

They shook hands.

"Tea?" Chien asked the two of them; he pressed the switch off his infrared hibachi and in an instant the water

in the highly ornamented ceramic pot—of Japanese origin—began to burble. As he seated himself at his desk he saw that trustworthy Miss Hsi had laid out the information poop-sheet (confidential) on Comrade Pethel; he glanced over it, meanwhile pretending to be doing nothing in particular.

"The Absolute Benefactor of the People," Tso-pin said, "has personally met Mr. Pethel and trusts him. This is rare. The school in San Fernando will appear to teach run-of-the-mill Taoist philosophies but will, of course, in actuality maintain for us a channel of communication to the liberal and intellectual youth segment of western U.S. There are many of them still alive, from San Diego to Sacramento; we estimate at least ten thousand. The school will accept two thousand. Enrollment will be mandatory for those we select. Your relationship to Mr. Pethel's programming is grave. Ahem; your tea water is boiling."

"Thank you," Chien murmured, dropping in the bag of Lipton's tea.

Tso-pin continued, "Although Mr. Pethel will supervise the setting up of the courses of instruction presented by the school to its student body, all examination papers will oddly enough be relayed here to your office for your own expert, careful, ideological study. In other words, Mr. Chien, you will determine who among the two thousand students is reliable, which are truly responding to the programming and who is not."

"I will now pour my tea," Chien said, doing so ceremoniously.

"What we have to realize," Pethel rumbled in Cantonese even worse than that of Tso-pin, "is that, once having lost the global war to us, the American youth has developed a talent for dissembling." He spoke the last word in English; not understanding it, Chien turned inquiringly to his superior.

"Lying," Tso-pin explained.

Pethel said, "Mouthing the proper slogans for surface appearance, but on the inside believing them false. Test papers by this group will closely resemble those of genuine—"

"You mean that the test papers of *two thousand* students will be passing through my office?" Chien demanded. He could not believe it. "That's a full-time job in itself; I don't have time for anything remotely resembling that." He was appalled. "To give critical, official approval or denial of the astute variety which you're envisioning—" He gestured. "Screw that," he said, in English.

Blinking at the strong, Western vulgarity, Tso-pin said, "You have a staff. Plus also you can requisition several more from the pool; the Ministry's budget, augmented this year, will permit it. And remember: the Absolute Benefactor of the People has hand-picked Mr. Pethel." His tone, now, had become ominous, but only subtly so. Just enough to penetrate Chien's hysteria, and to wither it into submission. At least temporarily. To underline his point, Tso-pin walked to the far end of the office; he stood before the full-length 3-D portrait of the Absolute Benefactor, and after an interval his proximity triggered the tape-transport mounted behind the portrait; the face of the Benefactor moved, and from it came a familiar homily, in more than familiar accents, "Fight for peace, my sons," it intoned gently, firmly.

"Ha," Chien said, still perturbed, but concealing it. Possibly one of the Ministry's computers could sort the examination papers; a yes-no-maybe structure could be employed, in conjunction with a pre-analysis of the pattern of ideological correctness—and incorrectness. The matter could be made routine. Probably.

Darius Pethel said, "I have with me certain material which I would like you to scrutinize, Mr. Chien." He unzipped an unsightly, old-fashioned, plastic briefcase. "Two examination essays," he said as he passed the documents to Chien. "This will tell us if you're qualified." He then glanced at Tso-pin; their gazes met. "I understand," Pethel said, "that if you are successful in this venture you will be made vice-councilor of the Ministry, and His Greatness the Absolute Benefactor of the People will personally confer Kisterigian's medal on you." Both he and Tso-pin smiled in wary unison.

"The Kisterigian medal," Chien echoed; he accepted the examination papers, glanced over them in a show of leisurely indifference. But within him his heart vibrated in ill-concealed tension. "Why these two? By that I mean, what am I looking for, sir?"

"One of them," Pethel said, "is the work of a dedicated progressive, a loyal Party member of thoroughly researched conviction. The other is by a young *stilyagi* whom we suspect of holding petit bourgeois imperialist degenerate crypto-ideas. It is up to you, sir, to determine which is which."

Thanks a lot, Chien thought. But, nodding, he read the title of the top paper.

DOCTRINES OF THE ABSOLUTE BENEFACTOR ANTICIPATED IN THE POETRY OF BAHA AD-DIN ZUHAYR, OF THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ARABIA.

Glancing down the initial pages of the essay, Chien saw a quatrain familiar to him; it was called "Death" and he had known it most of his adult, educated life.

One he will miss, twice he will miss,
  He only chooses one of many hours;
For him nor deep nor hill there is,
  But all's one level plain he hunts for flowers.

"Powerful," Chien said. "This poem."

"He makes use of the poem," Pethel said, observing Chien's lips moving as he reread the quatrain, "to indicate the age-old wisdom, displayed by the Absolute Benefactor in our current lives, that no individual is safe; everyone is mortal, and only the supra-personal, historically essential cause survives. As it should be. Would you agree with him? With this student, I mean? Or—" Pethel paused. "Is he in fact perhaps satirizing the Absolute Benefactor's promulgations?"

Cagily, Chien said, "Give me a chance to inspect the other paper."

"You need no further information; decide."

Haltingly, Chien said, "I—I had never thought of this poem that way." He felt irritable. "Anyhow, it isn't by Baha ad-Din Zuhayr; it's part of the *Thousand and One Nights* anthology. It is, however, thirteenth century; I admit that." He quickly read over the text of the paper accompanying the poem. It appeared to be a routine, uninspired rehash of Party clichés, all of them familiar to him from birth. The blind, imperialist monster who moved down and snuffed out (mixed metaphor) human aspiration, the calculations of the still extant anti-Party group in eastern United States . . . He felt dully bored, and as uninspired as the student's paper. We must persevere, the paper declared. Wipe out the Pentagon remnants in the Catskills, subdue Tennessee and most especially the pocket of die-hard reaction in the red hills of Oklahoma. He sighed.

"I think," Tso-pin said, "we should allow Mr. Chien the opportunity of observing this difficult matter at his leisure." To Chien he said, "You have permission to take them home to your condominium, this evening, and adjudge them on your own time." He bowed, half mockingly, half solicitously. In any case, insult or not, he had gotten Chien off the hook, and for that Chien was grateful.

"You are most kind," he murmured, "to allow me to perform this new and highly stimulating labor on my own time. Mikoyan, were he alive today, would approve." You bastard, he said to himself. Meaning both his superior and the Caucasian Pethel. Handing me a hot potato like this, and on my own time. Obviously the CP U.S.A. is in trouble; its indoctrination academies aren't managing to do their job with the notoriously mulish, eccentric Yank youths. And you've passed that hot potato on and on until it reaches me.

Thanks for nothing, he thought acidly.

That evéning in his small but well-appointed condominium apartment he read over the other of the two examination papers, this one by a Marion Culper, and discovered that it, too, dealt with poetry. Obviously this was

speciously a poetry class, and he felt ill. It had always run against his grain, the use of poetry—of any art for social purposes. Anyhow, comfortable in his special spine-straightening, simulated-leather easy chair, he lit a Cuesta Rey Number One English Market immense corona cigar and began to read.

The writer of the paper, Miss Culper, had selected as her text a portion of a poem of John Dryden, the seventeenth-century English poet, final lines from the well-known "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day."

> . . . So when the last and dreadful hour
> This crumbling pageant shall devour,
> The trumpet shall be heard on high,
> The dead shall live, the living die,
> And Music shall untune the sky.

Well, that's a hell of a thing, Chien thought to himself bitingly. Dryden, we're supposed to believe, anticipated the fall of capitalism? That's what he meant by the "crumbling pageant"? Christ. He leaned over to take hold of his cigar and found that it had gone out. Groping in his pockets for his Japanese-made lighter, he half rose to his feet. . . .

Tweeeeeee! the TV set at the far end of the living room said.

Aha, Chien said. We're about to be addressed by the Leader. By the Absolute Benefactor of the People, up there in Peking where he's lived for ninety years now; or is it one hundred? Or, as we sometimes like to think of him, the Ass—

"May the ten thousand blossoms of abject self-assumed poverty flower in your spiritual courtyard," the TV announcer said. With a groan, Chien rose to his feet, bowed the mandatory bow of response; each TV set came equipped with monitoring devices to narrate to the Secpol, the Security Police, whether its owner was bowing and/or watching.

On the screen a clearly defined visage manifested itself, the wide, unlined, healthy features of the one-hundred-and-

twenty-year-old leader of CP East, ruler of many far too many, Chien reflected. Blah to you, he thought, and reseated himself in his simulated-leather easy chair, now facing the TV screen.

"My thoughts," the Absolute Benefactor said in his rich and slow tones, "are on you, my children. And especially on Mr. Tung Chien of Hanoi, who faces a difficult task ahead, a task to enrich the people of Democratic East, plus the American West Coast. We must think in unison about this noble, dedicated man and the chore which he faces, and I have chosen to take several moments of my time to honor him and encourage him. Are you listening, Mr. Chien?"

"Yes, Your Greatness," Chien said, and pondered to himself the odds against the Party Leader singling *him* out this particular evening. The odds caused him to feel uncomradely cynicism; it was unconvincing. Probably this transmission was being beamed to his apartment building alone—or at least to this city. It might also be a lip-synch job, done at Hanoi TV, Incorporated. In any case he was required to listen and watch—and absorb. He did so, from a lifetime of practice. Outwardly he appreared to be rigidly attentive. Inwardly he was still mulling over the two test papers, wondering which was which; where did devout Party enthusiasm end and sardonic lampoonery begin? Hard to say . . . which of course explained why they had dumped the task in his lap.

Again he groped in his pockets for his lighter and found the small gray envelope which the war-veteran peddler had sold him. Gawd, he thought, remembering what it had cost. Money down the drain and what did this herbal remedy do? Nothing. He turned the packet over and saw, on the back. small printed words. Well, he thought, and began to unfold the packet with care. The words had snared him—as of course they were meant to do.

> Failing as a Party member and human?
> Afraid of becoming obsolete and dis-
> carded on the ash heap of history by

He read rapidly through the text, ignoring its claims, seeking to find out what he had purchased.

Meanwhile the Absolute Benefactor droned on.

Snuff. The package contained snuff. Countless tiny black grains, like gunpowder, which sent up an interesting aromatic to tickle his nose. The title of the particular blend was Princes Special, he discovered. And very pleasing, he decided. At one time he had taken snuff—smoked tobacco for a time having been illegal for reasons of health—back during his student days at Peking U; it had been the fad, especially the amatory mixes prepared in Chungking, made from god knew what. Was this that? Almost any aromatic could be added to snuff, from essence of organe to pulverized baby-crap . . . or so some seemed, especially an English mixture called High Dry Toast which had in itself more or less put an end to his yearning for nasal, inhaled tobacco.

On the TV screen the Absolute Benefactor rumbled monotonously on as Chien sniffed cautiously at the powder, read the claims -it cured everything from being late to work to falling in love with a woman of dubious political background. Interesting. But typical of claims—

His doorbell rang.

Rising, he walked to the door, opened it with full knowledge of what he would find. There, sure enough, stood Mou Kuei, the Building Warden, small and hard-eyed and alert to his task; he had his armband and metal helmet on, showing that he meant business. "Mr. Chien, comrade Party worker. I received a call from the television authority. You are failing to watch your screen and are instead fiddling with a packet of doubtful content." He produced a clipboard and ballpoint pen. "Two red marks, and hithertonow you are summarily ordered to repose yourself in a comfortable, stress-free posture before your screen and give the Leader your unexcelled attention. His words, this evening, are directed particularly to you, sir; to you."

"I doubt that," Chien heard himself say.

Blinking, Kuei said, "What do you mean?"

"The Leader rules eight billion comrades. He isn't going

to single me out." He felt wrathful; the punctuality of the warden's reprimand irked him.

Kuei said, "But I distinctly heard with my own ears. You were mentioned."

Going over to the TV set, Chien turned the volume up. "But now he's talking about failures in People's India; that's of no relevance to me."

"Whatever the Leader expostulates is relevant." Mou Kuei scratched a mark on his clipboard sheet, bowed formally, turned away. "My call to come up here to confront you with your slackness originated at Central. Obviously they regard your attention as important; I must order you to set in motion your automatic transmission recording circuit and replay the earlier portions of the Leader's speech."

Chien farted. And shut the door.

Back to the TV set, he said to himself. Where our leisure hours are spent. And there lay the two student examination papers; he had that weighing him down, too. And all on my own time, he thought savagely. The hell with them. Up theirs. He strode to the TV set, started to shut it off; at once a red warning light winked on, informing him that he did not have permission to shut off the set—could not in fact end its tirade and image even if he unplugged it. Mandatory speeches, he thought, will kill us all, bury us; if I could be free of the noise of speeches, free of the din of the Party baying as it hounds mankind . . .

There was no known ordinance, however, preventing him from taking snuff while he watched the Leader. So, opening the small gray packet, he shook out a mound of the black granules onto the back of his left hand. He then, professionally, raised his hand to his nostrils and deeply inhaled, drawing the snuff well up into his sinus cavities. Imagine the old superstition, he thought to himself. That the sinus cavities are connected to the brain, and hence an inhalation of snuff directly affects the cerebral cortex. He smiled, seated himself once more, fixed his gaze on the TV screen and the gesticulating individual known so utterly to them all.

The face dwindled away, disappeared. The sound ceased.

He faced an emptiness, a vacuum. The screen, white and blank, confronted him and from the speaker a faint hiss sounded.

The frigging snuff, he said to himself. And inhaled greedily at the remainder of the powder on his hand, drawing it up avidly into his nose, his sinuses, and, or so it felt, into his brain; he plunged into the snuff, absorbing it elatedly.

The screen remained blank and then, by degrees, an image once more formed and established itself. It was not the Leader. Not the Absolute Benefactor of the People, in point of fact not a human figure at all.

He faced a dead mechanical construct, made of solid state circuits, of swiveling pseudopodia, lenses and a squawk-box. And the box began, in a droning din, to harangue him.

Staring fixedly, he thought, *What is this?* Reality? Hallucination, he thought. The peddler came across some of the psychedelic drugs used during the War of Liberation—he's selling the stuff and I've taken some, taken a whole lot!

Making his way unsteadily to the vidphone he dialed the Secpol station nearest his building. "I wish to report a pusher of hallucinogenic drugs," he said into the receiver.

"Your name, sir, and conapt location?" Efficient, brisk and impersonal bureaucrat of the police.

He gave them the information, then haltingly made it back to his simulated-leather easy chair, once again to witness the apparition on the TV screen. This is lethal, he said to himself. It must be some preparation developed in Washington, D.C., or London—stronger and stranger than the LSD-25 which they dumped so effectively into our reservoirs. And I thought it was going to relieve me of the burden of the Leader's speeches . . . this is far worse, this electronic, sputtering, swiveling, metal and plastic monstrosity yammering away—this is terrifying.

To have to face *this* the remainder of my life—

It took ten minutes for the Secpol two-man team to come rapping at his door. And by then, in a deteriorating set of stages, the familiar image of the Leader had seeped back

into focus on the screen, had supplanted the horrible artificial construct which waved its 'podia and squalled on and on. He let the two cops in shakily, led them to the table on which he had left the remains of the snuff in its packet.

"Psychedelic toxin," he said thickly. "Of short duration. Absorbed into the blood stream directly, through nasal capillaries. I'll give you details as to where I got it, from whom, all that." He took a deep shaky breath; the presence of the police was comforting.

Ballpoint pens ready, the two officers waited. And all the time, in the background, the Leader rattled out his endless speech. As he had done a thousand evenings before in the life of Tung Chien. But, he thought, it'll never be the same again, at least not for me. Not after inhaling that near-toxic snuff.

He wondered, Is that what they intended?

It seemed odd to him, thinking of a *they*. Peculiar—but somehow correct. For an instant he hesitated, not giving out the details, not telling the police enough to find the man. A peddler, he started to say. I don't know where; can't remember. But he did; he remembered the exact street intersection. So, with unexplainable reluctance, he told them.

"Thank you, Comrade Chien." The boss of the team of police carefully gathered up the remaining snuff—most of it remained—and placed it in his uniform—smart, sharp uniform pocket. "We'll have it analyzed at the first available moment," the cop said, "and inform you immediately in case counter medical measures are indicated for you. Some of the old wartime psychedelics were eventually fatal, as you have no doubt read."

"I've read," he agreed. That had been specifically what he had been thinking.

"Good luck and thanks for notifying us," both cops said, and departed. The affair, for all their efficiency, did not seem to shake them; obviously such a complaint was routine.

The lab report came swiftly—surprisingly so, in view of the vast state bureaucracy. It reached him by vidphone before the Leader had finished his TV speech.

"It's not a hallucinogen," the Secpol lab technician informed him.

"No?" he said, puzzled and, strangely, not relieved. Not at all.

"On the contrary. It's a phenothiazine, which as you doubtless know is anti-hallucinogenic. A strong dose per gram of admixture, but harmless. Might lower your blood pressure or make you sleepy. Probably stolen from a wartime cache of medical supplies. Left by the retreating barbarians. I wouldn't worry."

Pondering, Chien hung up the vidphone in slow motion. And then walked to the window of his conapt—the window with the fine view of other Hanoi high-rise conapts—to think.

The doorbell rang. Feeling as if he were in a trance, he crossed the carpeted living room to answer it.

The girl standing there, in a tan raincoat with a babushka over her dark, shiny, and very long hair, said in a timid little voice, "Um, Comrade Chien? Tung Chien? Of the ministry of—"

He led her in, reflexively, and shut the door after her. "You've been monitoring my vidphone," he told her; it was a shot in darkness, but something in him, an unvoiced certitude, told him that she had.

"Did—they take the rest of the snuff?" She glanced about. "Oh, I hope not; it's so hard to get these days."

"Snuff," he said, "is easy to get. Phenothiazine isn't. Is that what you mean?"

The girl raised her head, studied him with large, moon-darkened eyes. "Yes. Mr. Chien—" She hesitated, obviously as uncertain as the Secpol cops had been assured. "Tell me what you saw; it's of great importance for us to be certain."

"I had a choice?" he said acutely.

"Y-yes, very much so. That's what confuses us; that's what is not as we planned. We don't understand; it fits nobody's theory." Her eyes even darker and deeper, she said, "Was it the aquatic horror shape? The thing with slime and

teeth, the extraterrestrial life form? Please tell me; we have to know." She breathed irregularly, with effort, the tan raincoat rising and falling; he found himself watching its rhythm.

"A machine," he said.

"Oh!" She ducked her head, nodding vigorously, "Yes, I understand; a mechanical organism in no way resembling a human. Not a simulacrum, something constructed to resemble a man."

He said, "This did not look like a man." He added to himself, And it failed—did not try—to talk like a man.

"You understand that it was not a hallucination."

"I've been officially told that what I took was a phenothiazine. That's all I know." He said as little as possible; he did not want to talk but to hear. Hear what the girl had to say.

"Well, Mr. Chien " She took a deep, unstable breath. "If it was not a hallucination, then what was it? What does that leave? What is called 'extra-consciousness'—could that be it?"

He did not answer; turning his back, he leisurely picked up the two student test papers, glanced over them, ignoring her. Waiting for her next attempt.

At his shoulder, she appeared, smelling of spring rain, smelling of sweetness and agitation, beautiful in the way she smelled, and looked, and, he thought, speaks. So different from the harsh plateau speech patterns we hear on the TV—have heard since I was a baby.

"Some of them," she said huskily, "who take the stelazine it was stelazine you got, Mr. Chien—see one apparition, some another. But distinct categories have emerged; there is not an infinite variety. Some see what you saw; we call it the Clanker. Some of the aquatic horror; that's the Gulper. And then there's the Bird, and the Climbing Tube, and -" She broke off. "But other reactions tell you very little. Tell *us* very little." She hesitated, then plunged on. "Now that this has happened to you, Mr. Chien, we would like you to join our gathering. Join your particular group, those who see what you see. Group Red. We want to know

what it *really* is, and –" She gestured with tapered, wax-smooth fingers. "It can't be *all* those manifestations." Her tone was poignant, naïvely so. He felt his caution relax—a trifle.

He said. "What do you see? You in particular?"

"I'm a part of Group Yellow. I see—a storm. A whining, vicious whirlwind. That roots everything up, crushes condominium apartments built to last a century." She smiled wanly. "The Crusher. Twelve groups in all, Mr. Chien. Twelve absolutely different experiences, all from the same phenothiazines, all of the Leader as he speaks over TV. As *it* speaks, rather." She smiled up at him, lashes long—probably protracted artificially—and gaze engaging, even trusting. As if she thought he knew something or could do something.

"I should make a citizen's arrest of you," he said presently.

"There is no law, not about this. We studied Soviet juridicial writings before we—found people to distribute the stelazine. We don't have much of it; we have to be very careful whom we give it to. It seemed to us that you constituted a likely choice . . . a well-known, postwar, dedicated young career man on his way up." From his fingers she took the examination papers. "They're having you pol-read?" she asked.

" 'Pol-read'?" He did not know the term.

"Study something said or written to see if it fits the Party's current world view. You in the hierarchy merely call it 'read,' don't you?" Again she smiled. "When you rise one step higher, up with Mr. Tso-pin, you will know that expression." She added somberly, "And with Mr. Pethel. He's very far up. Mr. Chien, there is no ideological school in San Fernando; these are forged exam papers, designed to read back to them a thorough analysis of *your* political ideology. And have you been able to distinguish which paper is orthodox and which is heretical?" Her voice was pixie-like, taunting with amused malice. "Choose the wrong one and your budding career stops dead, cold, in its tracks. Choose the proper one—"

"Do you know which is which?" he demanded.

"Yes." She nodded soberly. "We have listening devices in Mr. Tso-pin's inner offices; we monitored his conversation with Mr. Pethel—who is not Mr. Pethel but the Higher Secpol Inspector Judd Craine. You have possibly heard mention of him; he acted as chief assistant to Judge Vorlawsky at the '98 war crimes trial in Zurich."

With difficulty he said, "I—see." Well, that explained that.

The girl said, "My name is Tanya Lee."

He said nothing; her merely nodded, too stunned for any cerebration.

"Technically, I am a minor clerk," Miss Lee said, "at your Ministry. You have never run into me, however, that I can at least recall. We try to hold posts wherever we can. As far up as possible. My own boss—"

"Should you be telling me this?" He gestured at the TV set, which remained on. "Aren't they picking this up?"

Tanya Lee said, "We introduced a noise factor in the reception of both vid and aud material from this apartment building; it will take them almost an hour to locate the sheathing. So we have" she examined the tiny wristwatch on her slender wrist—"fifteen more minutes. And still be safe."

"Tell me," he said, "which paper is orthodox."

"Is that what you care about? Really?"

"What," he said, "should I care about?"

"Don't you see, Mr. Chien? You've learned something. The Leader is not the Leader; he is something else, but we can't tell what. Not yet. Mr. Chien, with all due respect, have you ever had your drinking water analyzed? I know it sounds paranoiac, but have you?"

"No," he said "Of course not." Knowing what she was going to say.

Miss Lee said briskly, "Our tests show that it's saturated with hallucinogens. It is, has been, will continue to be. Not the ones used during the war; not the disorientating ones, but a synthetic quasi-ergot derivative called Datrox-3. You drink it here in the building from the time you get up; you

drink it in restaurants and other apartments that you visit. You drink it at the Ministry; it's all piped from a central, common source." Her tone was bleak and ferocious. "We solved that problem; we knew, as soon as we discovered it, that any good phenothiazine would counter it. What we did not know, of course, was this—a *variety* of authentic experiences; that makes no sense, rationally. It's the hallucination which should differ from person to person, and the reality experience which should be ubiquitous—it's all turned around. We can't even construct an ad hoc theory which accounts for that, and god knows we've tried. Twelve mutually exclusive hallucinations—that would be easily understood. But not one hallucination and twelve realities." She ceased talking, then, and studied the two test papers, her forehead wrinkling. "The one with the Arabic poem is orthodox," she stated. "If you tell them that they'll trust you and give you a higher post. You'll be another notch up in the hierarchy of Party officialdom." Smiling—her teeth were perfect and lovely—she finished, "Look what you received back for your investment this morning. Your career is underwritten for a time. And by us."

He said, "I don't believe you." Instinctively, his caution operated within him, always, the caution of a lifetime lived among the hatchet men of the Hanoi branch of the CP East. They knew an infinitude of ways by which to ax a rival out of contention— some of which he himself had employed; some of which he had seen done to himself and to others. This could be a novel way, one unfamiliar to him. It could always be.

"Tonight," Miss Lee said, "in the speech the Leader singled you out. Didn't this strike you as strange? You, of all people? A minor officeholder in a meager ministry—"

"Admitted," he said. "It struck me that way; yes."

"That was legitimate. His Greatness is grooming an elite cadre of younger men, postwar men, he hopes will infuse new life into the hidebound, moribund hierarchy of old fogies and Party hacks. His Greatness singled you out for the same reason that we singled you out; if pursued properly,

your career could lead you all the way to the top. At least for a time . . . as we know. That's how it goes."

He thought, So virtually everyone has faith in me. Except myself; and certainly not after this, the experience with the anti-hallucinatory snuff. It had shaken years of confidence, and no doubt rightly so. However, he was beginning to regain his poise; he felt it seeping back, a little at first, then with a rush.

Going to the vidphone, he lifted the receiver and began, for the second time that night, to dial the number of the Hanoi Security Police.

"Turning me in," Miss Lee said, "would be the second most regressive decision you could make. I'll tell them that you brought me here to bribe me; you thought, because of my job at the Ministry, I would know which examination paper to select."

He said, "And what would be my first most regressive decision?"

"Not taking a further dose of phenothiazine," Miss Lee said evenly.

Hanging up the phone, Tung Chien thought to himself, I don't understand what's happening to me. Two forces, the Party and His Greatness on one hand—this girl with her alleged group on the other. One wants me to rise as far as possible in the Party hierarchy; the other *What did Tanya Lee want?* Underneath the words, inside the membrane of an almost trivial contempt for the Party, the Leader, the ethical standards of the People's Democratic United Front—what was she after in regard to him?

He said curiously, "Are you anti-Party?"

"No."

"But—" He gestured. "That's all there is; Party and anti-Party. You must be Party, then." Bewildered, he stared at her; with composure she returned the stare. "You have an organization," he said, "and you meet. What do you intend to destroy? The regular function of government? Are you like the treasonable college students of the United States during the Vietnam War who stopped troop trains, demonstrated—"

Wearily Miss Lee said, "It wasn't like that. But forget it; that's not the issue. What we want to know is this. who or what is leading us? We must penetrate far enough to enlist someone, some rising young Party theoretician, who could conceivably be invited to a tête-à-tête with the Leader—you see?" Her voice lifted; she consulted her watch, obviously anxious to get away: the fifteen minutes were almost up. "Very few persons actually see the Leader, as you know. I mean really see him."

"Seclusion," he said. "Due to his advanced age."

"We have hope," Miss Lee said, "that if you pass the phony test which they have arranged for you—and with my help you have—you will be invited to one of the stag parties which the Leader has from time to time, which of course the 'papes don't report. Now do you see?" Her voice rose shrilly, in a frenzy of despair. "Then we would know; if you could go in there under the influence of the anti-hallucinogenic drug, could see him face to face as he actually is—"

Thinking aloud, he said, "And end my career of public service. If not my life."

"You owe us something," Tanya Lee snapped, her cheeks white. "If I hadn't told you which exam paper to choose you would have picked the wrong one and your dedicated public service career would be over anyhow; you would have failed—failed at a test you didn't even realize you were taking!"

He said mildly, "I had a fifty-fifty chance."

"No." She shook her head fiercely. "The heretical one is faked up with a lot of Party jargon; they deliberately constructed the two texts to trap you. They *wanted* you to fail!"

Once more he examined the two papers, feeling confused. Was she right? Possibly. Probably. It rang true, knowing the Party functionaries as he did, and Tso-pin, his superior, in particular. He felt weary then. Defeated. After a time he said to the girl, "What you're trying to get out of me is a quid pro quo. You did something for me—you got, or claim you got—the answer to this Party inquiry. But you've

already done your part. What's to keep me from tossing you out of here on your head? I don't have to do a goddam thing." He heard his voice, toneless, sounding the poverty of empathic emotionality so usual in Party circles.

Miss Lee said, "There will be other tests, as you continue to ascend. And we will monitor for you with them too." She was calm, at ease; obviously she had foreseen his reaction.

"How long do I have to think it over?" he said.

"I'm leaving now. We're in no rush; you're not about to receive an invitation to the Leader's Yellow River villa in the next week or even month." Going to the door, opening it, she paused. "As you're given covert rating tests we'll be in contact, supplying the answers so you'll see one or more of us on those occasions. Probably it won't be me; it'll be that disabled war veteran who'll sell you the correct response sheets as you leave the Ministry building." She smiled a brief, snuffed-out-candle smile. "But one of these days, no doubt unexpectedly, you'll get an ornate, official, very formal invitation to the villa, and when you go you'll be heavily sedated with stelazine . . . possibly our last dose of our dwindling supply. Good night." The door shut after her; she had gone.

My god, he thought. They can blackmail me. For what I've done. And she didn't even bother to mention it; in view of what they're involved with it was not worth mentioning.

But blackmail for what? He had already told the Secpol squad that he had been given a drug which had proved to be a phenothiazine. *Then they know,* he realized. They'll watch me; they're alert. Technically, I haven't broken a law, but they'll be watching, all right.

However, they always watched anyhow. He relaxed slightly, thinking that. He had, over the years, become virtually accustomed to it, as had everyone.

I will see the Absolute Benefactor of the People as he is, he said to himself. Which possibly no one else has done. What will it be? Which of the subclasses of non-hallucination? Classes which I do not even know about . . . a view which

may totally overthrow me. How am I going to be able to get through the evening, to keep my poise, if it's like the shape I saw on the TV screen? The Crusher, the Clanker, the Bird, the Climbing Tube, the Gulper -or worse.

He wondered what some of the other views consisted of ... and then gave up that line of speculation; it was unprofitable. And too anxiety-inducing.

The next morning Mr. Tso-pin and Mr. Darius Pethel met him in his office, both of them calm but expectant. Wordlessly, he handed them one of the two "exam papers". The orthodox one, with its short and heart-smothering Arabian poem.

"This one," Chien said tightly, "is the product of a dedicated Party member or candidate for membership. The other—" He slapped the remaining sheets. "Reactionary garbage." He felt anger. "In spite of a superficial "

"All right, Mr. Chien," Pethel said, nodding. "We don't have to explore each and every ramification; your analysis is correct. You heard the mention regarding you in the Leader's speech last night on TV?"

"I certainly did," Chien said.

"So you have undoubtedly inferred," Pethel said, "that there is a good deal involved in what we are attempting, here. The Leader has his eye on you; that's clear. As a matter of fact, he has communicated to myself regarding you." He opened his bulging briefcase and rummaged. "Lost the goddam thing. Anyhow—" He glanced at Tso-pin, who nodded slightly. "His Greatness would like to have you appear for dinner at the Yangtze River Ranch next Thursday night. Mrs. Fletcher in particular appreciates—"

Chien said, " 'Mrs. Fletcher'? Who is 'Mrs. Fletcher'?"

After a pause Tso-pin said dryly, "The Absolute Benefactor's wife. His name—which you of course had never heard—is Thomas Fletcher."

"He's a Caucasian," Pethel explained. "Originally from the New Zealand Communist Party; he participated in the difficult take-over there. This news is not in the strict sense

secret, but on the other hand it hasn't been noised about." He hesitated, toying with his watchchain. "Probably it would be better if you forgot about that. Of course, as soon as you meet him, see him face to face, you'll realize that, realize that he's a Cauc. As I am. As many of us are."

"Race," Tso-pin pointed out, "has nothing to do with loyalty to the Leader and the Party. As witness Mr. Pethel, here."

But His Greatness, Chien thought, jolted. He did not appear, on the TV screen, to be occidental. "On TV—" he began.

"The image," Tso-pin interrupted, "is subjected to a variegated assortment of skillful refinements. For ideological purposes. Most persons holding higher offices are aware of this." He eyed Chien with hard criticism.

So everyone agrees, Chien thought. What we see every night is not real. The question is, How unreal? Partially? Or—completely?

"I will be prepared," he said tautly. And he thought, There has been a slip-up. They weren't prepared for me—the people that Tanya Lee represents—to gain entry so soon. Where's the anti-hallucinogen? Can they get it to me or not? Probably not on such short notice.

He felt, strangely, relief. He would be going into the presence of His Greatness in a position to see him as a human being, see him as he—and everybody else—saw him on TV. It would be a most stimulating and cheerful dinner party, with some of the most influential Party members in Asia. I think we can do without the phenothiazines, he said to himself. And his sense of relief grew.

"Here it is, finally," Pethel said suddenly, producing a white envelope from his briefcase. "Your card of admission. You will be flown by Sino-rocket to the Leader's villa Thursday morning; there the protocol officer will brief you on your expected behavior. It will be formal dress, white tie and tails, but the atmosphere will be cordial. There are always a great number of toasts." He added, "I have at-

tended two such stag gets-together. Mr. Tso-pin"—he smiled creakily—"has not been honored in such a fashion. But as they say, all things come to him who waits. Ben Franklin said that."

Tso-pin said, "It has come for Mr. Chien rather prematurely, I would say." He shrugged philosophically. "But my opinion has never at any time been asked."

"One thing," Pethel said to Chien. "It is possible that when you see His Greatness in person you will be in some regards disappointed. Be alert that you do not let this make itself apparent, if you should so feel. We have, always, tended -been trained—to regard him as more than a man. But at table he is"—he gestured—"a forked radish. In certain respects like ourselves. He may for instance indulge in moderately human oral-aggressive and -passive activity; he possibly may tell an off-color joke or drink too much . . . To be candid, no one ever knows in advance how these things will work out, but they do generally hold forth until late the following morning. So it would be wise to accept the dosage of amphetamines which the protocol officer will offer you."

"Oh?" Chien said. This was news to him, and interesting.

"For stamina. And to balance the liquor. His Greatness has amazing staying power; he often is still on his feet and raring to go after everyone else has collapsed."

"A remarkable man," Tso-pin chimed in. "I think his—indulgences only show that he is a fine fellow. And fully in the round; he is like the ideal Renaissance man; as, for example, Lorenzo de' Medici."

"That does come to mind," Pethel said; he studied Chien with such intensity that some of last night's chill returned. Am I being led into one trap after another? Chien wondered. That girl—was she in fact an agent of the Secpol probing me, trying to ferret out a disloyal, anti-Party streak in me?

I think, he decided, I will make sure that the legless peddler of herbal remedies does not snare me when I leave

work; I'll take a totally different route back to my conapt.

He was successful. That day he avoided the peddler and the same the next, and so on until Thursday.

On Thursday morning the peddler scooted from beneath a parked truck and blocked his way, confronting him.

"My medication?" the peddler demanded. "It helped? I know it did; the formula goes back to the Sung Dynasty—I can tell it did. Right?"

Chien said, "Let me go."

"Would you be kind enough to answer?" The tone was not the expected, customary whining of a street peddler operating in a marginal fashion, and that tone came across to Chien; he heard loud and clear . . . as the Imperialist puppet troops of long ago phrased it.

"I know what you gave me," Chien said. "And I don't want any more. If I change my mind I can pick it up at a pharmacy. Thanks." He started on, but the cart, with the legless occupant, pursued him.

"Miss Lee was talking to me," the peddler said loudly.

"Hmmm," Chien said, and automatically increased his pace; he spotted a hovercab and began signaling for it.

"It's tonight you're going to the stag dinner at the Yangtze River villa," the peddler said, panting for breath in his effort to keep up. "Take the medication—now!" He held out a flat packet, imploringly. "Please, Party Member Chien; for your own sake, for all of us. So we can tell what it is we're up against. Good lord, it may be non-terran; that's our most basic fear. Don't you understand, Chien? What's your goddam career compared with that? If we can't find out—"

The cab bumped to a halt on the pavement; its door slid open, Chien started to board it.

The packet sailed past him landed on the entrance sill of the cab, then slid into the gutter, damp from earlier rain.

"Please," the peddler said. "And it won't cost you anything; today it's free. Just take it, use it before the stag dinner. And don't use the amphetamines; they're a thalamic

stimulant, contra-indicated whenever an adrenal suppressant such as a phenothiazine is -"

The door of the cab closed after Chien. He seated himself.

"Where to, comrade?" the robot drive-mechanism inquired.

He gave the ident tag number of his conapt.

"That half-wit of a peddler managed to infiltrate his seedy wares into my clean interior," the cab said. "Notice; it reposes by your foot."

He saw the packet—no more than an ordinary-looking envelope. I guess, he thought, this is how drugs come to you; all of a sudden they're there. For a moment he sat, and then he picked it up.

As before, there was a written enclosure above and beyond the medication, but this time, he saw, it was hand-written. A feminine script: from Miss Lee:

> We were surprised at the suddenness. But thank heaven we were ready. Where were you Tuesday and Wednesday? anyhow, here it is, and good luck. I will approach you later in the week; I don't want you to try to find me.

He ignited the note, burned it up in the cab's disposal ashtray.

And kept the dark granules.

All this time, he thought. Hallucinogens in our water supply. Year after year. Decades. And not in wartime but in peacetime. And not to the enemy camp but here in our own. The evil bastards, he said to himself. Maybe I ought to take this; maybe I ought to find out what he or it is and let Tanya's group know.

I will, he decided. And—he was curious.

A bad emotion, he knew. Curiosity was, especially in Party activities, often a terminal state careerwise.

A state which, at the moment, gripped him thoroughly. He wondered if it would last through the evening, if, when it

came right down to it, he would actually take the inhalant.

Time would tell. Tell that and everything else. We are blooming flowers, he thought, on the plain, which he picks. As the Arabic poem had put it. He tried to remember the rest of the poem but could not.

That probably was just as well.

The villa protocol officer, a Japanese named Kimo Okubara, tall and husky, obviously a quondam wrestler, surveyed him with innate hostility, even after he presented his engraved invitation and had successfully managed to prove his identity.

"Surprise you bother to come," Okubara muttered. "Why not stay home and watch on TV? Nobody miss you. We got along fine without up to right now."

Chien said tightly, "I've already watched on TV." And anyhow the stag dinners were rarely televised; they were too bawdy.

Okubara's crew double-checked him for weapons, including the possibility of an anal suppository, and then gave him his clothes back. They did not find the phenothiazine, however. Because he had already taken it. The effects of such a drug, he knew, lasted approximately four hours; that would be more than enough. And, as Tanya had said, it was a major dose; he felt sluggish and inept and dizzy, and his tongue moved in spasms of pseudo Parkinsonism an unpleasant side effect which he had failed to anticipate.

A girl, nude from the waist up, with long coppery hair down her shoulders and back, walked by. Interesting.

Coming the other way, a girl nude from the bottom up made her appearance. Interesting, too. Both girls looked vacant and bored, and totally self-possessed.

"You go in like that too," Okubara informed Chien.

Startled, Chien said, "I understood white tie and tails."

"Joke," Okubara said. "At your expense. Only girls wear nude; you even get so you enjoy, unless you homosexual."

Well, Chien thought, I guess I had better like it. He wan-

dered on with the other guests—they, like him, wore white tie and tails or, if women, floor-length gowns and felt ill at ease, despite the tranquilizing effect of the stelazine. Why am I here? he asked himself. The ambiguity of his situation did not escape him. He was here to advance his career in the Party apparatus, to obtain the intimate and personal nod of approval from His Greatness . . . and in addition he was here to decipher His Greatness as a fraud; he did not know what variety of fraud, but there it was: fraud against the Party, against all the peace-loving democratic peoples of Terra. Ironic, he thought. And continued to mingle.

A girl with small, bright, illuminated breasts approached him for a match; he absent-mindedly got out his lighter. "What makes your breasts glow?" he asked her. "Radioactive injections?"

She shrugged, said nothing, passed on, leaving him alone. Evidently he had responded in the incorrect way.

Maybe it's a wartime mutation, he pondered.

"Drink, sir." A servant graciously held out a tray; he accepted a martini –which was the current fad among the higher Party classes in People's China—and sipped the ice-cold dry flavor. Good English gin, he said to himself. Or possibly the original Holland compound; juniper or whatever they added. Not bad. He strolled on, feeling better; in actuality he found the atmosphere here a pleasant one. The people here were self-assured; they had been successful and now they could relax. It evidently was a myth that proximity to His Greatness produced neurotic anxiety: he saw no evidence here, at least, and felt little himself.

A heavy-set elderly man, bald, halted him by the simple means of holding his drink glass against Chien's chest. "That frably little one who asked you for a match," the elderly man said, and sniggered. "The quig with the Christmas-tree breasts—that was a boy, in drag." He giggled. "You have to be cautious around here."

"Where, if anywhere," Chien said, "do I find authentic women? In white ties and tails?"

"Darn near," the elderly man said, and departed with a

throng of hyperactive guests, leaving Chien alone with his martini.

A handsome, tall woman, well dressed, standing near Chien, suddenly put her hand on his arm; he felt her fingers tense and she said, "Here he comes. His Greatness. This is the first time for me; I'm a little scared. Does my hair look all right?"

"Fine," Chien said reflexively, and followed her gaze, seeking a glimpse—his first—of the Absolute Benefactor.

What crossed the room toward the table in the center was not a man.

And it was not, Chien realized, a mechanical construct either; it was not what he had seen on TV. That evidently was simply a device for speechmaking, as Mussolini had once used an artificial arm to salute long and tedious processions.

God, he thought, and felt ill. Was this what Tanya Lee had called the "aquatic horror" shape? It had no shape. Nor pseudopodia, either flesh or metal. It was, in a sense, not there at all; when he managed to look directly at it, the shape vanished; he saw through it, saw the people on the far side—but not it. Yet if he turned his head, caught it out of a sidelong glance, he could determine its boundaries.

It was terrible; it blasted him with its awfulness. As it moved it drained the life from each person in turn; it ate the people who had assembled, passed on, ate again, ate more with an endless appetite. It hated; he felt its hate. It loathed; he felt its loathing for everyone present—in fact he shared its loathing. All at once he and everyone else in the big villa were each a twisted slug, and over the fallen slug-carcasses the creature savored, lingered, but all the time coming directly toward him—or was that an illusion? If this is a hallucination, Chien thought, it is the worst I have ever had; if it is not, then it is evil reality; it's an evil thing that kills and injures. He saw the trail of stepped-on, mashed men and women remnants behind it; he saw them trying to re-assemble, to operate their crippled bodies; he heard them attempting speech.

I know who you are, Tung Chien thought to himself. You, the supreme head of the world-wide Party structure. You, who destroy whatever living object you touch; I see that Arabic poem, the searching for the flowers of life to eat them—I see you astride the plain which to you is Earth, plain without hills, without valleys. You go anywhere, appear any time, devour anything; you engineer life and then guzzle it, and you enjoy that.

He thought, You are God.

"Mr. Chien," the voice said, but it came from inside his head, not from the mouthless spirit that fashioned itself directly before him. "It is good to meet you again. You know nothing. Go away. I have no interest in you. Why should I care about slime? Slime; I am mired in it, I must excrete it, and I choose to. I could break you; I can break even myself. Sharp stones are under me; I spread sharp pointed things upon the mire. I make the hiding places, the deep places, boil like a pot; to me the sea is like a lot of ointment. The flakes of my flesh are joined to everything. You are me. I am you. It makes no difference, just as it makes no difference whether the creature with ignited breasts is a girl or boy; you could learn to enjoy either." It laughed.

He could not believe it was speaking to him; he could not imagine—it was too terrible— that it had picked him out.

"I have picked everybody out," it said. "No one is too small; each falls and dies and I am there to watch. I don't need to do anything but watch; it is automatic; it was arranged that way." And then it ceased talking to him; it disjoined itself. But he still saw it; he felt its manifold presence. It was a globe which hung in the room, with fifty thousand eyes, a million eyes—billions: an eye for each living thing as it waited for each thing to fall, and then stepped on the living things as it lay in a broken state. Because of this it had created the things, and he knew; he understood. What had seemed in the Arabic poem to be death was not death but god; or rather God was death, it was one force, one hunter, one cannibal thing, and it missed again and again but, having all eternity, it could afford to miss. Both poems, he realized;

the Dryden one too. The crumbling; that is our world and you are doing it. Warping it to come out that way; bending us.

But at least, he thought, I still have my dignity. With dignity he set down his drink glass, turned, walked toward the doors of the room. He passed through the doors. He walked down a long carpeted hall. A villa servant dressed in purple opened a door for him; he found himself standing out in the night darkness, on a veranda, alone.

Not alone.

It had followed after him. Or it had already been here before him; yes, it had been expecting. It was not really through with him.

"Here I go," he said, and made a dive for the railing; it was six stories down, and there below gleamed the river and death, real death, not what the Arabic poem had seen.

As he tumbled over, it put an extension of itself on his shoulder.

"Why?" he said. But, in fact, he paused. Wondering. Not understanding, not at all.

"Don't fall on my account," it said. He could not see it because it had moved behind him. But the piece of it on his shoulder it had begun to look like a human hand.

And then it laughed.

"What's funny?" he demanded, as he teetered on the railing, held back by its pseudo-hand.

"You're doing my task for me," it said. "You aren't waiting; don't you have time to wait? I'll select you out from among the others; you don't need to speed the process up."

"What if I do?" he said. "Out of revulsion for you?"

It laughed. And didn't answer.

"You won't even say," he said.

Again no answer. He started to slide back, onto the veranda. And at once the pressure of its pseudo-hand lifted.

"You founded the Party?" he asked.

"I founded everything. I founded the anti-Party and the Party that isn't a Party, and those who are for it and those who are against, those that you call Yankee Imperialists,

those in the camp of reaction, and so on endlessly. I founded it all. As if they were blades of grass."

"And you're here to enjoy it?" he said.

"What I want," it said, "is for you to see me, as I am, as you have seen me, and then trust me."

"What?" he said, quavering. "Trust you to what?"

It said, "Do you believe in me?"

"Yes," he said. "I can see you."

"Then go back to your job at the Ministry. Tell Tanya Lee that you saw an overworked, overweight, elderly man who drinks too much and likes to pinch girls' rear ends."

"Oh, Christ," he said.

"As you live on, unable to stop, I will torment you," it said. "I will deprive you, item by item, of everything you possess or want. And then when you are crushed to death I will unfold a mystery."

"What's the mystery?"

"The dead shall live, the living die. I kill what lives; I save what has died. And I will tell you this: *there are things worse than I*. But you won't meet them because by then I will have killed you. Now walk back into the dining room and prepare for dinner. Don't question what I'm doing; I did it long before there was a Tung Chien and I will do it long after."

He hit it as hard as he could.

And experienced violent pain in his head.

And darkness, with the sense of falling.

After that, darkness again. He thought, I will get you. I will see that you die too. That you suffer; you're going to suffer, just like us, exactly in every way we do. I'll nail you; I swear to god I'll nail you up somewhere. And it will hurt. As much as I hurt now.

He shut his eyes.

Roughly, he was shaken. And heard Mr. Kimo Okubara's voice. "Get to your feet, common drunk. Come on!"

Without opening his eyes he said, "Get me a cab."

"Cab already waiting. You go home. Disgrace. Make a violent scene out of yourself."

Getting shakily to his feet, he opened his eyes, examined himself. Our Leader whom we follow, he thought is the One True God. And the enemy whom we fight and have fought is God too. They are right; he is everywhere. But I didn't understand what that meant. Staring at the protocol officer, he thought, You are God too. So there is no getting away, probably not even by jumping. As I started, instinctively, to do. He shuddered.

"Mix drinks with drugs," Okubara said witheringly. "Ruin career. I see it happen many times. Get lost."

Unsteadily, he walked toward the great central door of the Yangtze River villa; two servants, dressed like medieval knights, with crested plumes, ceremoniously opened the door for him and one of them said, "Good night, sir."

"Up yours," Chien said, and passed out into the night.

At a quarter to three in the morning, as he sat sleepless in the living room of his conapt, smoking one Cuesta Rey Astoria after another, a knock sounded at the door.

When he opened it he found himself facing Tanya Lee in her trenchcoat, her face pinched with cold. Her eyes blazed, questioningly.

"Don't look at me like that," he said roughly. His cigar had gone out; he relit it. "I've been looked at enough," he said.

"You saw it," she said.

He nodded.

She seated herself on the arm of the couch and after a time she said, "Want to tell me about it?"

"Go as far from here as possible" he said. "Go a long way." And then he remembered; no way was long enough. He remembered reading that too. "Forget it," he said; rising to his feet, he walked clumsily into the kitchen to start up the coffee.

Following after him, Tanya said, "Was it that bad?"

"We can't win," he said. "You can't win; I don't mean me. I'm not in this; I just want to do my job at the Ministry and forget it. Forget the whole damned thing."

"Is it non-terrestrial?"

"Yes." He nodded.

"Is it hostile to us?"

"Yes," he said. "No. Both. Mostly hostile."

"Then we have to—"

"Go home," he said, "and go to bed." He looked her over carefully; he had sat a long time and he had done a great deal of thinking. About a lot of things. "Are you married?" he said.

"No. Not now. I used to be."

He said, "Stay with me tonight. The rest of tonight, anyhow. Until the sun comes up." He added, "The night part is awful."

"I'll stay," Tanya said, unbuckling the belt of her raincoat, "but I have to have some answers."

"What did Dryden mean," Chien said, "about music untuning the sky? I don't get that. What does music do to the sky?"

"All the celestial order of the universe ends," she said as she hung her raincoat up in the closet of the bedroom; under it she wore an orange striped sweater and stretch-pants.

He said, "And that's bad?"

Pausing, she reflected. "I don't know. I guess so."

"It's a lot of power," he said, "to assign to music."

"Well, you know that old Pythagorean business about the 'music of the spheres'." Matter-of-factly she seated herself on the bed and removed her slipperlike shoes.

"Do you believe in that?" he said. "Or do you believe in God?"

" 'God'!" She laughed. "That went out with the donkey steam engine. What are you talking about? God, or god?" She came over close beside him, peering into his face.

"Don't look at me so closely," he said sharply drawing back. "I don't ever want to be looked at again." He moved away, irritably.

"I think," Tanya said, "that if there is a God He has very little interest in human affairs. That's my theory, anyhow. I mean, He doesn't seem to care if evil triumphs or people and

animals get hurt and die. I frankly don't see Him anywhere around. And the Party has always denied any form of—"

"Did you ever see Him?" he asked. "When you were a child?"

"Oh, sure, as a child. But I also believed—"

"Did it ever occur to you," Chien said, "that good and evil are names for the same thing? That God could be both good and evil at the same time?"

"I'll fix you a drink," Tanya said, and padded barefoot into the kitchen.

Chien said, "The Crusher. The Clanker. The Gulper and the Bird and the Climbing Tube—plus other names, forms, I don't know. I had a hallucination. At the stag dinner. A big one. A terrible one."

"But the stelazine—"

"It brought on a worse one," he said.

"Is there any way," Tanya said somberly, "that we can fight this thing you saw? This apparition you call a hallucination but which very obviously was not?"

He said, "Believe in it."

"What will that do?"

"Nothing," he said wearily. "Nothing at all. I'm tired; I don't want a drink—let's just go to bed."

"Okay." She padded back into the bedroom, began pulling her striped sweater over her head. "We'll discuss it more thoroughly later."

"A hallucination," Chien said, "is merciful. I wish I had it; I want mine back. I want to be before your peddler got to me with that phenothiazine."

"Just come to bed. It'll be toasty. All warm and nice."

He removed his tie, his shirt—and saw, on his right shoulder, the mark, the stigma, which it had left when it stopped him from jumping. Livid marks which looked as if they would never go away. He put his pajajma top on, then; it hid the marks.

"Anyhow," Tanya said as he got into the bed beside her, "your career is immeasurably advanced. Aren't you glad about that?"

"Sure," he said, nodding sightlessly in the darkness. "Very glad."

"Come over against me," Tanya said, putting her arms around him. "And forget everything else. At least for now."

He tugged her against him, then, doing what she asked and what he wanted to do. She was neat; she was swiftly active; she was successful and she did her part. They did not bother to speak until at last she said, "Oh!" And then she relaxed.

"I wish," he said, "that we could go on forever."

"We did," Tanya said. "It's outside of time; it's boundless, like an ocean. It's the way we were in Cambrian times, before we migrated up onto the land; it's the ancient primary waters. This is the only time we get to go back, when this is done. That's why it means so much. And in those days we weren't separate; it was like a big jelly, like those blobs that float up on the beach."

"Float up," he said, "and are left there to die."

"Could you get me a towel?" Tanya asked. "Or a washcloth? I need it."

He padded into the bathroom for a towel. There—he was naked, now—he once more saw his shoulder, saw where it had seized hold of him and held on, dragged him back, possibly to toy with him a little more.

The marks, unaccountably, were bleeding.

He sponged the blood away. More oozed forth at once and, seeing that, he wondered how much time he had left. Probably only hours.

Returning to bed, he said, "Could you continue?"

"Sure. If you have any energy left; it's up to you." She lay gazing up at him unwinkingly, barely visible in the dim nocturnal light.

"I have," he said. And hugged her to him.

Afterword:

I don't advocate any of the ideas in "Faith of Our Fathers";

I don't for example, claim that the Iron Curtain countries will win the cold war—or morally ought to. One theme in the story, however, seems compelling to me, in view of the recent experiments with hallucinogenic drugs: the theological experience, which so many who have taken LSD have reported. This appears to me to be a true new frontier; to a certain extent the religious experience can now be scientifically studied . . . and, what is more, may be viewed as part hallucination but containing other, real components. God, as a topic in science fiction, when it appeared at all, used to be treated polemically, as in "Out of the Silent Planet". But I prefer to treat it as intellectually exciting. What if, through psychedelic drugs, the religious experiences becomes commonplace in the life of intellectuals? The old atheism, which seemed to many of us –including me—valid in terms of our experiences, or rather lack of experiences, would have to step momentarily aside. Science fiction, always probing what is about to be thought, become, must eventually tackle without preconceptions a future neomystical society in which theology constitutes as major a force as in the medieval period. This is not necessarily a backward step, because now these beliefs can be tested forced to put up or shut up. I, myself, have no real beliefs about God; only my experience that He is present . . . subjectively, of course; but the inner realm is real too. And in a science fiction story one projects what has been a personal inner experience into a milieu; it becomes socially shared, hence discussable. The last word, however, on the subject of God may have already been said: in A.D. 840 by John Scotus Erigena at the court of the Frankish king Charles the Bald. "We do not know what God is. God Himself does not know what He is because He is not anything. Literally God *is not*, because He transcends being." Such a penetrating and Zen mystical view, arrived at so long ago, will be hard to top; in my own experiences with psychedelic drugs I have had previous tiny illumination compared with Erigena.

THE JIGSAW MAN

Introduction to

THE JIGSAW MAN:

It is generally agreed that, of the newer, younger writers in the speculative writing arena, one of the most promising challengers is Larry Niven. He has been writing for two years and has already found his own style, his own voice. He writes what is called "hard" science fiction—i.e., his scientific extrapolation is based solidly in what is known at the date of his writing; in a Niven story you will find no beer cans on Mars and no hidden planet circling around the other side of Sol on the same orbit as Earth. To the casual consideration, it might seem that this would limit the horizons of Niven's work. For a lesser imagination that might be true. But Larry Niven deals in minutiae; and in the tinier facts—very often overlooked by writers who mistakenly suppose exciting speculative fiction can only be built around huge, obvious subjects—he finds fascinating areas for development of very personal, very unconventional stories.

He has worked so hard, and so well, in these past two years, that his fifth published story, "Beclamed in Hell", was a runner-up in the short-story category of the 1965 Nebula Awards presented by the Science Fiction writers of America. He has already been anthologized in a handful of "best" collections. And the end is nowhere in sight. He is, in point of fact, a formidable Great White Hope of this genre.

Larry is a millionaire. No, really. A genuine, authentic moneyed-type millionaire. It is a comment on his dedication to the science fiction he loves that he chooses to live solely off the money he makes writing. There aren't many of us hungry, pale, struggling hacks who can say the same.

Larry Niven was born in Los Angeles, scion of the Doheny family, and grew up in Beverly Hills. As a math major going for a BA at Cal-Tech, he flunked out after five terms—one

and two thirds years. Eventually completed BA in math at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, after slowing the process by taking a lot of philosophy and English courses and a minor in psychology. UCLA for his graduate MA in math, and after one year he suddenly turned around and said to the world (which was not, at that point, particularly attentive), "I've decided I'd rather write science fiction. It is June 1963 and now I begin." He sold his first story, "The Coldest Place," exactly one year later, to Fred Pohl, editor of *Worlds of If*. Of this sale, Larry comments: "The story was made totally obsolete by Russian astronomical discoveries concerning Mercury, circa August 1964. I had already cashed the check. Fred Pohl was stuck with the damned thing. He published it in December 1964. My family, which had given me enough static to jam all of Earth's transmissions for the next century, when I informed them I was going to be a writer ('get an *honest* job!'), stopped bugging me immediately. Now I get to sleep late, which is what being a writer is all about, anyhow."

Interesting sidelight on Niven *et famille*. Having two sets of parents after a 1953 divorce, he must supply each with a Larry Niven Five-Foot Shelf of s-f, so they can brag about him when he's within earshot. His brother and sister-in-law gave him a scrapbook for his birthday in 1965, so he is required to buy a third copy of everything to tear up for that, and a fourth set to keep for his files. Thus, he loses money every time he sells a story.

He is the author of an excellent Ballantine novel, *World of Ptavvs*, and the author of the story that follows, an incisive and frighteningly logical comment on future penology, based solidly in today, God forbid.

THE JIGSAW MAN

by Larry Niven

In A.D. 1900 Karl Landsteiner classified human blood into four types: A, B, AB, and O, according to incompatibilities.

For the first time it became possible to give a shock patient a transfusion with some hope that it wouldn't kill him.

The movement to abolish the death penalty was barely getting started, and already it was doomed.

Vh83uOAGn7 was his telephone number and his driving license number and his social security number and the number of his draft card and his medical record. Two of these had been revoked, and the others had ceased to matter, except for his medical record. His name was Warren Lewis Knowles. He was going to die.

The trial was a day away, but the verdict was no less certain for that. Lew was guilty. If anyone had doubted it, the persecution had ironclad proof. By eighteen tomorrow Lew would be condemned to death. Broxton would appeal the case on some grounds or other. The appeal would be denied.

His cell was comfortable, small, and padded. This was no slur on the prisoner's sanity, though insanity was no longer an excuse for breaking the law. Three of the walls were mere bars. The fourth wall, the outside wall, was cement painted a restful shade of green. But the bars which separated him from the corridor, and from the morose old man on his left, and from the big, moronic-looking teenager on his right—the bars were four inches thick and eight inches apart, padded in silicone plastic. For the fourth time that day Lew took a clenched fistful of the plastic and tried to rip it away. It felt like a sponge rubber pillow, with a rigid core the thickness of a pencil, and it wouldn't rip. When he let go it snapped back to a perfect cylinder.

"It's not fair," he said.

The teenager didn't move. For all of the ten hours Lew had been in his cell, the kid had been sitting on the edge of his bunk with his lank black hair falling in his eyes and his five o'clock shadow getting gradually darker. He moved his long, hairy arms only at mealtimes, and the rest of him not at all.

The old man looked up at the sound of Lew's voice. He spoke with bitter sarcasm. "You framed?"

"No, I—"

"At least you're honest. What'd you do?"

Lew told him. He couldn't keep the hurt innocence out of his voice. The old man smiled derisively, nodding as if he'd expected just that.

"Stupidity. Stupidity's always been a capital crime. If you *had* to get yourself executed, why not for something important? See the kid on the other side of you?"

"Sure," Lew said without looking.

"He's an organlegger."

Lew felt the shock freezing in his face. He braced himself for another look into the next cell—and every nerve in his body jumped. The kid was looking at him. With his dull dark eyes barely visible under his mop of hair, he regarded Lew as a butcher might consider a badly aged side of beef.

Lew edged closer to the bars between his cell and the old man's. His voice was a hoarse whisper. "How many did he kill?"

"None."

"?"

"He was the snatch man. He'd find someone out alone at night, drug the prospect and take him home to the doc that ran the ring. It was the doc that did all the killing. If Bernie'd brought home a dead prospect, the doc would have skinned *him* down."

The old man sat with Lew almost directly behind him. He had twisted himself around to talk to Lew, but now he seemed to be losing interest. His hands, hidden from Lew by his bony back, were in constant nervous motion.

"How many did he snatch?"

"Four. Then he got caught. He's not very bright, Bernie."

"What did you do to get put here?"

The old man didn't answer. He ignored Lew completely, his shoulders twitching as he moved his hands. Lew shrugged and dropped back on his bunk.

It was nineteen o'clock of a Thursday night.

The ring had included three snatch men. Bernie had not

yet been tried. Another was dead; he had escaped over the edge of a pedwalk when he felt the mercy bullet enter his arm. The third was being wheeled into the hospital next door to the courthouse.

Officially he was still alive. He had been sentenced; his appeal had been denied; but he was still alive as they moved him, drugged, into the operating room.

The interns lifted him from the table and inserted a mouthpiece so he could breath when they dropped him into freezing liquid. They lowered him without a splash, and as his body temperature went down they dribbled something else into his veins. About half a pint of it. His temperature dropped toward freezing, his heartbeats were further and further apart. Finally his heart stopped. But it could have been started again. Men had been reprieved at this point. Officially the organlegger was still alive.

The doctor was a line of machines with a conveyor belt running through them. When the organlegger's body temperature reached a certain point, the belt started. The first machine made a series of incisions in his chest. Skillfully and mechanically, the doctor performed a cardiectomy.

The organlegger was officially dead. His heart went into storage immediately. His skin followed, most of it in one piece, all of it still living. The doctor took him apart with exquisite care, like disassembling a flexible, fragile, tremendously complex jigsaw puzzle. The brain was flashburned and the ashes saved for urn burial; but all the rest of the body, in slabs and small blobs and parchment-thin layers and lengths of tubing, went into storage in the hospital's organ banks. Any one of these units could be packed in a travel case at a moment's notice and flown to anywhere in the world in not much more than an hour. If the odds broke right, if the right people came down with the right diseases at the right time, the organlegger might save more lives that he had taken.

Which was the whole point.

Lying on his back, staring up at the ceiling telvision set,

Lew suddenly began to shiver. He had not had the energy to put the sound plug in his ear, and the silent motion of the cartoon figures had suddenly become horrid. He turned the set off, and that didn't help either.

Bit by bit they would take him apart and store him away. He'd never seen an organ storage bank, but his uncle had owned a butcher-shop. . . .

"Hey!" he yelled.

The kid's eyes came up, the only living part of him. The old man twisted round to look over his shoulder. At the end of the hall the guard looked up once, then went back to reading.

The fear was in Lew's belly; it pounded in his throat. "How can you stand it?"

The kid's eyes dropped to the floor. The old man said, "Stand what?"

"Don't you know what they're going to *do* to us?"

"Not to me. They won't take me apart like a hog."

Instantly Lew was at the bars. "Why not?"

The old man's voice had become very low. "Because there's a bomb where my right thighbone used to be. I'm gonna blow myself up. What they find, they'll never use."

The hope the old man had raised washed away, leaving bitterness. "Nuts. How could you put a bomb in your leg?"

"Take the bone out, bore a hole in it, build the bomb in the hole, get all the organic material out of the bone so it won't rot, put the bone back in. 'Course your red corpuscle count goes down afterward. What I wanted to ask you. You want to join me?"

"Join you?"

"Hunch up against the bars. This thing'll take care of both of us."

Lew had backed up against the opposite set of bars.

"Your choice," said the old man. "I never told you what I was here for, did I? I was the doc. Bernie made his snatches for me."

Lew had backed up against the opposite set of bars. He

felt them touch his shoulders and turned to find the kid looking dully into his eyes from two feet away. Organ-leggers! He was surrounded by professional killers!

"I know what it's like," the old man continued. "They won't do that to me. Well. If you're sure you don't want a clean death, go lie down behind your bunk. It's thick enough."

The bunk was a mattress and a set of springs mounted into a cement block which was an integral part of the cement floor. Lew curled himself into fetal position with his hands over his eyes.

He was sure he didn't want to die *now*.

Nothing happened.

After a while he opened his eyes, took his hands away and looked around.

The kid was looking at him. For the first time there was a sour grin plastered on his face. In the corridor the guard, who was always in a chair by the exit, was standing outside the bars looking down at him. He seemed concerned.

Lew felt the flush rising in his neck and nose and ears. The old man had been playing with him. He moved to get up . . .

And a hammer came down on the world.

The guard lay broken against the bars of the cell across the corridor. The lank-haired youngster was picking himself up from behind his bunk, shaking his head. Somebody groaned; and the groan rose to a scream. The air was full of cement dust.

Lew got up.

Blood lay like red oil on every surface that faced the explosion. Try as he might, and he didn't try very hard, Lew could find no other trace of the old man.

Except for the hole in the wall.

He must have been standing . . . right . . . there.

The hole would be big enough to crawl through, if Lew could reach it. But it was in the old man's cell. The silicone plastic sheathing on the bars between the cells had been ripped away, leaving only pencil-thick lengths of metal.

Lew tried to squeeze through.

The bars were humming, vibrating, though there was no sound. As Lew noticed the vibration he also found that he was becoming sleepy. He jammed his body between the bars, caught in a war between his rising panic and the sonic stunners which must have gone on automatically.

The bars wouldn't give. But his body did; and the bars were slippery with . . . He was through. He poked his head through the hole in the wall and looked down.

Way down. Far enough to make him dizzy.

The Topeka County courthouse was a small skyscraper, and Lew's cell must have been near the top. He looked down a smooth concrete slab studded with windows set flush with the sides. There would be no way to reach those windows, no way to open them, no way to break them.

The stunner was sapping his will. He would have been unconscious by now if his head had been in the cell with the rest of him. He had to force himself to turn and look up.

He was at the top. The edge of the roof was only a few feet above his eyes. He couldn't reach that far, not without . . .

He began to crawl out of the hole.

Win or lose, they wouldn't get him for the organ banks. The vehicular traffic level would smash every useful part of him. He sat on the lip of the hole, with his legs straight out inside the cell for balance, pushing his chest flat against the wall. When he had his balance he stretched his arms toward the roof. No good.

So he got one leg under him, keeping the other stiffly out, and *lunged*.

His hands closed over the edge as he started to fall back. He yelped with surprise, but it was too late. The top of the courthouse was moving! It had dragged him out of the hole before he could let go. He hung on, swinging slowly back and forth over empty space as the motion carried him away.

The top of the courthouse was a pedwalk.

He couldn't climb up, not without purchase for his feet.

He didn't have the strength. The pedwalk was moving toward another building, about the same height. He could reach it if he only hung on.

And the windows in that building were different. They weren't made to open, not in these days of smog and air conditioning, but there were ledges. Perhaps the glass would break.

Perhaps it wouldn't.

The pull on his arms was agony. It would be so easy to let go. . . . No. He had committed no crime worth dying for. He refused to die.

Over the decades of the twentieth century the movement continued to gain momentum. Loosely organized, international in scope, its members had only one goal: to replace execution with imprisonment and rehabilitation in every state and nation they could reach. They argued that killing a man for his crime teaches him nothing; that it serves as no deterrent to others who might commit the same crime; that death is irreversible, wheras an innocent man might be released from prison once his innocence is belatedly proven. Killing a man serves no good purpose, they said, unless for society's vengeance. Vengeance, they said, is unworthy of an enlightened society.

Perhaps they were right.

In 1940 Karl Landsteiner and Alexander S. Wiener made public their report on the Rh factor in human blood.

By mid-century most convicted killers were getting life imprisonment or less. Many were later returned to soceity, some "rehabilitated", others not. The death penalty had been passed for kidnaping in some states, but it was hard to persuade a jury to enforce it. Similarly with murder charges. A man wanted for burglary in Canada and murder in California fought extradition to Canada; he had less chance of being convicted in California. Many states had abolished the death penalty. France had none.

Rehabilitation of criminals was a major goal of the science/art of psychology.

But—

Blood banks were world wide.

Already men and women with kidney diseases had been saved by a kidney transplanted from an identical twin. Not all kidney victims had identical twins. A doctor in Paris used transplants from close relatives, classifying up to a hundred points of incompatibility to judge in advance how successful the transplant would be.

Eye transplants were common. An eye donor could wait until he died before he saved another man's sight.

Human bone could *always* be transplanted, provided the bone was first cleaned of organic matter.

So matters stood at midcentury.

By 1990 it was possible to store any living human organ for any reasonable length of time. Transplants had become routine, helped along by the "scalpel of infinite thinness", the laser. The dying regularly willed their remains to the organ banks. The mortuary lobbies couldn't stop it. But such gifts from the dead were not always useful.

In 1993 Vermont passed the first of the organ bank laws. Vermont had always had the death penalty. Now a condemned man could know that his death would save lives. It was no longer true that an execution served no good purpose. Not in Vermont.

Nor, later, in California. Or Washington. Georgia. Pakistan, England, Switzerland, France, Rhodesia . . .

The pedwalk was moving at ten miles per hour. Below, unnoticed by pedestrians who had quit work late and night owls who were just beginning their rounds, Lewis Knowles hung from the moving strip and watched the ledge go by beneath his dangling feet. The ledge was no more than two feet wide, a good four feet beneath his stretching toes.

He dropped.

As his feet struck he caught the edge of a window casement. Momentum jerked at him, but he didn't fall. After a long moment he breathed again.

He couldn't know what building this was, but it was not deserted. At twenty-one hundred at night, all the windows were ablaze. He tried to stay back out of the light as he peered in.

The window was an office. Empty.

He'd need something to wrap around his hand to break that window. But all he was wearing was a pair of shoesocks and a prison jumper. Well, he couldn't be more conspicuous than he was now. He took off the jumper, wrapped part of it around his hand, and struck.

He almost broke his hand.

Well . . . they'd let him keep his jewelry, his wristwatch and diamond ring. He drew a circle on the glass with the ring, pushing down hard, and struck again with the other hand. It *had* to be glass; if it was plastic he was doomed. The glass popped out in a near-perfect circle.

He had to do it six times before the hole was big enough for him.

He smiled as he stepped inside, still holding his jumper. Now all he needed was an elevator. The cops would have picked him up in an instant if they'd caught him on the street in a prison jumper, but if he hid the jumper here he'd be safe. Who would suspect a licensed nudist?

Except that he didn't have a license. Or a nudist's shoulder pouch to put it in.

Or a shave.

That was very bad. Never had there been a nudist as hairy as this. Not just a five o'clock shadow, but a full beard all over, so to speak. Where could he get a razor?

He tried the desk drawers. Many businessmen kept spare razors. He stopped when he was halfway through. Not because he'd found a razor, but because he knew where he was. The papers on his desk made it all too obvious.

A hospital.

He was still clutching the jumper. He dropped it in the wastebasket, covered it tidily with papers, and more or less collapsed into the chair behind the desk.

A hospital. He *would* pick a hospital. And *this* hospital,

the one which had been built right next to the Topeka County courthouse, for good and sufficient reason.

But he hadn't picked it, not really. It had picked him. Had he ever in his life made a decision except on the prompting of others? No. Friends had borrowed his money for keeps, men had stolen his girls, he had avoided promotion by his knack for being ignored. Shirley had bullied him into marrying her, then left him four years later for a friend who wouldn't be bullied.

Even now, at the possible end of his life, it was the same. An aging body snatcher had given him his escape. An engineer had built the cell bars wide enough apart to let a small man squeeze between them. Another had put a pedwalk along two convenient roofs. And here he was.

The worst of it was that here he had no chance of masquerading as a nudist. Hospital gowns and masks would be the minimum. Even nudists had to wear clothing sometime.

The closet?

There was nothing in the closet but a spiffy green hat and a perfectly transparent rain poncho.

He could run for it. If he could find a razor he'd be safe once he reached the street. He bit at a knuckle, wishing he knew where the elevator was. Have to trust to luck. He began searching the drawers again.

He had his hand on a black leather razor case when the door opened. A beefy man in a hospital gown breezed in. The intern (there were no human doctors in hospitals) was halfway to the desk before he noticed Lew crouching over an open drawer. He stopped walking. His mouth fell open.

Lew closed it with the fist which still gripped the razor case. The man's teeth came together with a sharp click. His knees were buckling as Lew brushed past him and out the door.

The elevator was just down the hall, with the doors standing open. And nobody coming. Lew stepped in and punched O. He shaved as the elevator dropped. The razor cut fast and close, if a trifle noisily. He was working on his chest as the door opened.

A skinny technician stood directly in front of him, her mouth and eyes set in the utterly blank expression of those who wait for elevators. She brushed past him with a muttered apology, hardly noticing him. Lew stepped out fast. The doors were closing before he realized that he was on the wrong floor.

That damned tech! She'd stopped the elevator before it reached bottom.

He turned and stabbed the Down button. Then what he'd seen in that one cursory glance came back to him, and his head whipped around for another look.

The whole vast room was filled with glass tanks, ceiling height, arranged in a labyrinth like the bookcases in a library. In the tanks was a display more lewd than anything in Belsen. Why, those things had been *men!* and *women!* No, he wouldn't look. He refused to look at anything but the elevator door. *What was taking that elevator so long?*

He heard a siren.

The hard floor began to vibrate against his bare feet. He felt a numbness in his muscles, a lethargy in his soul.

The elevator arrived . . . too late. He blocked the doors open with a chair. Most buildings didn't have stairs; only alternate elevators. They'd have to use the alternate elevator to reach him now. Well, where was it . . . He wouldn't have time to find it. He was beginning to feel really sleepy. They must have several sonic projectors focused on this one room. Where one beam passed the interns would feel mildly relaxed, a little clumsy. But where the beams intersected, here, there would be unconsciousness. But not yet.

He had something to do first.

By the time they broke in they'd have something to kill him for.

The tanks were faced in plastic, not glass: a very special kind of plastic. To avoid provoking defense reactions in all the myriads of body parts which might be stored touching it, the plastic had to have unique characteristics. No engineer could have been expected to make it shatterproof too!

It shattered very satisfactorily.

Later Lew wondered how he managed to stay up as long as he did. The soothing hypersonic murmur of the stun beams kept pulling at him, pulling him down to a floor which seemed softer every moment. The chair he wielded became heavier and heavier. But as long as he could lift it, he smashed. He was knee deep in nutritive storage fluid, and there were dying things brushing against his ankles with every move; but his work was barely a third done when the silent siren song became too much for him.

He fell.

And after all that they never even mentioned the smashed organ banks!

Sitting in the courtroom, listening to the drone of courtroom ritual, Lew sought Mr. Broxton's ear to ask the question. Mr. Broxton smiled at him. "Why should they want to bring that up? They think they've got enough on you as it is. If you beat *this* rap, then they'll persecute you for wanton destruction of valuable medical sources. But they're sure you won't."

"And you?"

"I'm afraid they're right. But we'll try. Now, Hennessey's about to read the charges. Can you manage to look hurt and indignant."

"Sure."

"Good."

The prosecution read the charges, his voice sounding like the voice of doom coming from under a thin blond mustache. Warren Lewis Knowles looked hurt and indignant. But he no longer felt that way. He had done something worth dying for.

The cause of it all was the organ banks. With good doctors and a sufficient flow of material in the organ banks, any taxpayer could hope to live indefinitely. What voter would vote against eternal life. The death penalty was his immortality, and he would vote the death penalty for any crime at all.

Lewis Knowles had struck back.

"The state will prove that the said Warren Lewis Knowles did, in the space of two years, willfully drive through a total of six red traffic lights. During that same period the same Warren Knowles exceeded local speed limits no less than ten times, once by as much as fifteen miles per hour. His record has never been good. We will produce records of his arrest in 2082 on a charge of drunk driving, a charge of which he was acquitted only through—"

"Objection!"

"Sustained. If he was acquitted, Counselor, the Court must assume him not guilty."

Afterword:

There's an organ bank in your future, or your grandchildren's. Nothing short of a world holocaust could stop it. The rapid advance in transplant techniques is common knowledge. Many of the greats of science fiction have written on the organ bank problem, because it is so inevitable and because it is so interesting.

The following should not provoke arguments, but it has, and will:

Human technology can change human morals.

If you doubt it, consider: dynamite, gunpowder, the printing press, the cotton gin, modern advertising techniques, psychology. Consider the automobile: it is now immoral to go home at all after a New Year's Eve party. (Unless you take a cab, which cannot be done except at gunpoint.) Consider the cobalt bomb, which has made total war immoral. Was total war immoral before the cobalt bomb? In 1945 the Allies demanded nothing less than total defeat for Germany. Were they wrong? Did you say so at the time? I didn't (being seven years old) and don't (at twenty-eight).

What happens when the death of one genuine criminal can save the lives of twenty taxpayers? Morals change.

Much of the science/art of psychology has dealt with rehabilitation of criminals. These techniques will soon be forgotten lore, like alchemy.

But organ transplants are only half the story. Alloplasty, the science and empirical technique of putting foreign matter in the human body for medical purposes, is a combating influence. Thousands walk today's streets with metal pacemakers in their hearts, nylon tubing replacing sections of artery, plastic valves replacing the organic valves in the large veins, transparent insets in the lenses of their eyes. When alloplasty heals a man, nobody dies.

You may think of the next five hundred years as a footrace between two techniques, alloplasty and organ transplantation. But organ transplantation will win. It is a simpler set of techniques.

The good side of organ transplantation is very good indeed. As long as the organ banks don't run short of materials, any citizen can live as long as his central nervous system holds out, since the doctors can keep shoving spare parts into him as fast as the old ones wear out. How long can the brain live with a dependable, youthful blood supply? It's your guess. I say centuries.

But, with centuries of life at stake, what citizen will vote against the death penalty for: false advertising, habitual jaywalking, rudeness, cheating on income tax, having children without a license? Or (and here's the real danger) criticizing government policy? Given the organ banks, "The Jigsaw Man" is a glimpse into the best of possible futures. The worst is a never-ending dictatorship.

On Christmas Day 1965, Harlan told me he was collecting material for an anthology. I was halfway through a novel dealing with the organ bank problem on one of Earth's interstellar colonies (almost finished), and I took time out to demonstrate how the problem may affect Earth.

I think I could have sold the story anywhere. But it will cause arguments, thus fulfilling its purpose. Because someone has to start thinking about this. We haven't much time. It's only an accident of history that Red Cross blood banks aren't supplied by the death house. Think of the advantages—and worry.

GONNA ROLL THE BONES

Introduction to

GONNA ROLL THE BONES:

The field of speculative fiction, oddly enough, tends to make specialists of its writers. There are alien ecologists such as Hal Clement, and poetic imagists such as Ray Bradbury, and world-destroyers such as Edmond Hamilton and A. E. van Vogt. There are all too few "renaissance" writers who span the speculative gamut from gothic fantasy to grommet-and-nozzle stories of "hard" science. And among these few jacks-of-all-forms, there are only a handful who can handle the tale of terror in a context of modern society.

Fritz Leiber, who as a two-time Hugo winner truly needs no introduction, is certainly the most ambidextrous of that handful. Born in Chicago in 1910, son of Shakespearean actors Fritz and Virginia Bronson Leiber, he was educated at the University of Chicago emerging with a Bachelor's in psychology with honors and a third-year Phi Beta Kappa. He has been an Episcopalian lay reader and attended General Theological Seminary in New York, acted in his father's touring company in 1935, done editorial work from 1937 through 1956 with one year teaching dramatics at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He was associate editor of *Science Digest* from 1945 to 1956 and has been a free-lance writer since.

For the benefit of historians, Fritz Leiber's first accepted story was "The Automatic Pistol", which appeared in *Weird Tales* for May 1940. His first published (and paid for) story was "Two Sought Adventure", the first of his memorable sword-and-sorcery series of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, which saw publication in the August 1939 issue of *Unknown*. Among his fourteen books Leiber fans will warmly remember *Conjure Wife, Gather, Darkness!*, the 1958 and 1964 Hugo winners, *The Big Time* and *The Wanderer, Night's*

Black Agents, A Pail of Air and the recent *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold.*

It is, incidentally, fitting that, of all the possible choices for writers to pen a *new* adventure employing the world-famous Edgar Rice Burroughs character, the job should have fallen to Fritz Leiber. His ability to bring not merely expertise but genuine poetry to anything he writes has kept him in the forefront of imaginative writing for over two decades. As demonstrated in the Tarzan novel, his wild talent for fusing the imaginative with the realistic is nonpareil. And as his contribution to this anthology, nothing could be more appropriate than the story Fritz has chosen to tell. For it singlehandedly explains why lines of demarcation between fantasy and science fiction can seldom be drawn.

"Gonna Roll the Bones" is Fritz Leiber's first short story in two years, as this introduction is written. It shows the Leiberesque conception of the Universe being unified by magic and science and superstition, as well as blatantly displaying the man's love affair with the English language. It is uncategorizable though it bears traces of pure horror, science fiction, the psychological fantasy and the Jungian explanations for the personal madness of our times. Insofar as prerequisites were established for stories for this collection, it satisfies estimably: the authors were asked to present "dangerous" visions, and I submit there are few more petrifying concepts than the one Fritz Leiber here proffers in finally naming the name of the Prince of Darkness.

GONNA ROLL THE BONES

by Fritz Leiber

Suddenly Joe Slattermill knew for sure he'd have to get out quick or else blow his top and knock out with the shrapnel of his skull the props and patches holding up his decaying home, that was like a house of big wooden and plaster and

wallpaper cards except for the huge fireplace and ovens and chimney across the kitchen from him.

Those were stone-solid enough, though. The fireplace was chin-high at least twice that long, and filled from end to end with roaring flames. Above were the square doors of the ovens in a row—his Wife baked for part of their living. Above the ovens was the wall-long mantelpiece, too high for his Mother to reach or Mr. Guts to jump any more, set with all sorts of ancestral curios, but any of them that weren't stone or glass or china had been so dried and darkened by decades of heat that they looked like nothing but shrunken human heads and black golf balls. At one end were clustered his Wife's square gin bottles. Above the mantelpiece hung one old chromo, so high and so darkened by soot and grease that you couldn't tell whether the swirls and fat cigar shape were a whaleback steamer plowing through a hurricane or a spaceship plunging through a storm of light-driven dust motes.

As soon as Joe curled his toes inside his boots, his Mother knew what he was up to. "Going bumming," she mumbled with conviction. "Pants pockets full of cartwheels of house money, too, to spend on sin." And she went back to munching the long shreds she stripped fumblingly with her right hand off the turkey carcass set close to the terrible heat, her left hand ready to fend off Mr. Guts, who stared at her yellow-eyed, gaunt-flanked, with long mangy tail a-twitch. In her dirty dress, streaky as the turkey's sides, Joe's Mother looked like a bent brown bag and her fingers were lumpy twigs.

Joe's Wife knew as soon or sooner, for she smiled thin-eyed at him over her shoulder from where she towered at the centermost oven. Before she closed its door, Joe glimpsed that she was baking two long, flat, narrow, fluted loaves and one high, round-domed one. She was thin as death and disease in her violet wrapper. Without looking, she reached out a yard-long, skinny arm for the nearest gin bottle and downed a warm slug and smiled again. And without word spoken, Joe knew she'd said, "You're going out and gamble

and get drunk and lay a floozy and come home and beat me and go to jail for it," and he had a flash of the last time he'd been in the dark gritty cell and she'd come by moonlight, which showed the green and yellow lumps on her narrow skull where he'd hit her, to whisper to him through the tiny window in back and slip him a half pint through the bars.

And Joe knew for certain that this time it would be that bad and worse, but just the same he heaved up himself and his heavy, muffledly clanking pockets and shuffled straight to the door, muttering, "Guess I'll roll the bones, up the pike a stretch and back," swinging his bent, knobby-elbowed arms like paddlewheels to make a little joke about his words.

When he'd stepped outside, he held the door open a hand's breadth behind for several seconds. When he finally closed it, a feeling of deep misery struck him. Earlier years, Mr. Guts would have come streaking along to seek fights and females on the roofs and fences, but now the big tom was content to stay home and hiss by the fire and snatch for turkey and dodge a broom, quarreling and comforting with two housebound women. Nothing had followed Joe to the door but his Mother's chomping and her gasping breaths and the clink of the gin bottle going back on the mantel and the creaking of the floor boards under his feet.

The night was upside-down deep among the frosty stars. A few of them seemed to move, like the white-hot jets of spaceships. Down below it looked as if the whole town of Ironmine had blown or buttoned out the light and gone to sleep, leaving the streets and spaces to the equally unseen breezes and ghosts. But Joe was still in the hemisphere of the musty dry odor of the worm-eaten carpentry behind him and as he felt and heard the dry grass of the lawn brush his calves, it occurred to him that something deep down inside him had for years been planning things so that he and the house and his Wife and Mother and Mr. Guts would all come to an end together. Why the kitchen heat hadn't touched off the tindery place ages ago was a physical miracle.

Hunching his shoulders, Joe stepped out, not up the pike, but down the dirt road that led past Cypress Hollow Cemetery to Night Town.

The breezes were gentle, but unusually restless and variable tonight, like leprechaun squalls. Beyond the drunken, whitewashed cemetery fence dim in the starlight, they rustled the scraggly trees of Cypress Hollow and made it seem they were stroking their beards of Spanish moss. Joe sensed that the ghosts were just as restless as the breezes, uncertain where and whom to haunt, or whether to take the night off, drifting together in sorrowfully lecherous companionship. While among the trees the red-green vampire lights pulsed faintly and irregularly, like sick fireflies or a plague-stricken space fleet. The feeling of deep misery stuck with Joe and deepened and he was tempted to turn aside and curl up in any convenient tomb or around some half-toppled head board and cheat his Wife and the other three behind him out of a shared doom. He thought: Gonna roll the bones, gonna roll 'em up and go to sleep. But while he was deciding, he got past the sagged-open gate and the rest of the delirious fence and Shantyville too.

At first Night Town seemed dead as the rest of Ironmine, but then he noticed a faint glow, sick as the vampire lights but more feverish, and with it a jumping music, tiny at first as a jazz for jitterbugging ants. He stepped along the springy sidewalk, wistfully remembering the days when the spring was all in his own legs and he'd bound into a fight like a bobcat or a Martian sand-piper. God, it had been years now since he had fought a real fight, or felt *the power*. Gradually that midget music got raucous as a bunnyhug for grizzly bears and loud as a polka for elephants, while the glow became a riot of gas flares and flambeaux and corpse-blue mercury tubes and jiggling pink neon ones that all jeered at the stars where the spaceships roved. Next thing, he was facing a three-story false front flaring everywhere like a devil's rainbow, with a pale blue topping of St. Elmo's fire. There were wide swinging doors in the center of it, spilling light above and below. Above the doorway, golden calcium light

scrawled over and over again, with wild curlicues and flourishes, "The Boneyard", while a fiendish red kept printing out, "Gambling".

So the new place they'd all been talking about for so long had opened at last! For the first time that night, Joe Slattermill felt a stirring of real life in him and the faintest caress of excitement.

Gonna roll the bones, he thought.

He dusted off his blue-green work clothes with big, careless swipes and slapped his pockets to hear the clank. Then he threw back his shoulders and grinned his lips sneeringly and pushed through the swinging doors as if giving a foe the straight-armed heel of his palm.

Inside, The Boneyard seemed to cover the area of a township and the bar looked as long as the railroad tracks. Round pools of light on the green poker tables alternated with hourglass shapes of exciting gloom, through which drink girls and change girls moved like white-legged witches. By the jazz-stand in the distance, belly dancers made *their* white hourglass shapes. The gamblers were thick and hunched down as mushrooms, all bald from agonizing over the fall of a card or a die or the dive of an ivory ball, while the Scarlet Women were like fields of poinsettia.

The calls of the croupiers and the slaps of dealt cards were as softly yet fatefully staccato as the rustle and beat of the jazz drums. Every tight-locked atom of the place was controlledly jumping. Even the dust motes jigged tensely in the cones of light.

Joe's excitement climbed and he felt sift through him, like a breeze that heralds a gale, the faintest breath of a confidence which he knew could become a tornado. All thoughts of his house and wife and Mother dropped out of his mind, while Mr. Guts remained only as a crazy young tom walking stiff-legged around the rim of his consciousness. Joe's own leg muscles twitched in sympathy and he felt them grow supplely strong.

He coolly and searchingly looked the place over, his hand going out like it didn't belong to him to separate a drink

from a passing, gently bobbing tray. Finally his gaze settled on what he judged to be the Number One Crap Table. All the Big Mushrooms seemed to be there, bald as the rest but standing tall as toadstools. Then through a gap in them Joe saw on the other side of the table a figure still taller, but dressed in a long dark coat with collar turned up and a dark slouch hat pulled low, so that only a triangle of white face showed. A suspicion and a hope rose in Joe and he headed straight for the gap in the Big Mushrooms.

As he got nearer, the white-legged and shiny-topped drifters eddying out of his way, his suspicion received confirmation after confirmation and his hope budded and swelled. Back from one end of the table was the fattest man he'd ever seen, with a long cigar and a silver vest and a gold tie clasp at least eight inches wide that just said in thick script, "Mr. Bones". Back a little from the other end was the nakedest change-girl yet and the only one he'd seen whose tray, slung from her bare shoulders and indenting her belly just below her breasts, was stacked with gold in gleaming little towers and with jet-black chips. While the dice-girl, skinnier and taller and longer armed than his Wife even, didn't seem to be wearing much but a pair of long white gloves. She was all right if you went for the type that isn't much more than pale skin over bones with breasts like china doorknobs.

Beside each gambler was a high round table for his chips. The one by the gap was empty. Snapping his fingers at the nearest silver change-girl, Joe traded all his greasy dollars for an equal number of pale chips and tweaked her left nipple for luck. She playfully snapped her teeth toward his fingers.

Not hurrying but not wasting any time, he advanced and carelessly dropped his modest stacks on the empty table and took his place in the gap. He noted that the second Big Mushroom on his right had the dice. His heart but no other part of him gave an extra jump. Then he steadily lifted his eyes and looked straight across the table.

The coat was a shimmering elegant pillar of black satin with jet buttons, the upturned collar of fine dull plush black

as the darkest cellar, as was the slouch hat with down-turned brim and for band only a thin braid of black horsehair The arms of the coat were long, lesser satin pillars, ending in slim, long-fingered hands that moved swiftly when they did, but held each position of rest with a statue's poise.

Joe still couldn't see much of the face except for smooth lower forehead with never a bead or trickle of sweat—the eyebrows were like straight snippets of the hat's braid and gaunt, aristocratic cheeks and narrow but somewhat flat nose. The complexion of the face wasn't as white as Joe had first judged. There was a faint touch of brown in it, like ivory that's just begun to age, or Venusian soapstone. Another glance at the hands confirmed this.

Behind the man in black was a knot of just about the flashiest and nastiest customers, male or female, Joe had ever seen. He knew from one look that each bediamonded, pomaded bully had a belly gun beneath the flap of his flowered vest and a blackjack in his hip pocket, and each snake-eyed sporting girl a stiletto in her garter and a pearl-handled silver-plated derringer under the sequined silk in the hollow between her jutting breasts.

Yet at the same time Joe knew they were just trimmings. It was the man in black, their master, who was the deadly one, the kind of man you knew at a glance you couldn't touch and live. If without asking you merely laid a finger on his sleeve, no matter how lightly and respectfully, an ivory hand would move faster than thought and you'd be stabbed or shot. Or maybe just the touch would kill you, as if every black article of his clothing were charged from his ivory skin outward with a high-voltage, high-amperage ivory electricity. Joe looked at the shadowed face again and decided he wouldn't care to try it.

For it was the eyes that were the most impressive feature. All great gamblers have dark-shadowed deep-set eyes. But this one's eyes were sunk so deep you couldn't even be sure you were getting a gleam of them. They were inscrutability incarnate. They were unfathomable. They were like black holes.

But all this didn't disappoint Joe one bit, though it did terrify him considerably. On the contrary, it made him exult. His first suspicion was completely confirmed and his hope spread into full flower.

This must be one of those really big gamblers who hit Ironmine only once a decade at most, come from the Big City on one of the river boats that ranged the watery dark like luxurious comets, spouting long thick tails of sparks from their sequoia-tall stacks with top foliage of curvy-snipped sheet iron. Or like silver space-liners with dozens of jewel-flames jets, their portholes a-twinkle like ranks of marshaled asteroids.

For that matter, maybe some of those really big gamblers actually came from other planets where the nighttime pace was hotter and the sporting life a delirium of risk and delight.

Yes, this was the kind of man Joe had always yearned to pit his skill against. He felt *the power* begin to tingle in his rock-still fingers, just a little.

Joe lowered his gaze to the crap table. It was almost as wide as a man is tall, at least twice as long, unusually deep, and lined with black, not green, felt, so that it looked like a giant's coffin. There was something familiar about its shape which he couldn't place. Its bottom, though not its sides or ends, had a twinkling iridescence, as if it had been lightly sprinkled with very tiny diamonds. As Joe lowered his gaze all the way and looked directly down, his eyes barely over the table, he got the crazy notion that it went down all the way through the world, so that the diamonds were the stars on the other side, visible despite the sunlight there, just as Joe was always able to see the stars by day up the shaft of the mine he worked in, and so that if a cleaned-out gambler, dizzy with defeat, toppled forward into it, he'd fall forever, toward the bottommost bottom, be it Hell or some black galaxy. Joe's thoughts swirled and he felt the cold, hard-fingered clutch of fear at his crotch. Someone was crooning beside him, "Come on, Big Dick."

Then the dice, which had meanwhile passed to the Big Mushroom immediately on his right, came to rest near the

table's center, contradicting and wiping out Joe's vision. But instantly there was another oddity to absorb him. The ivory dice were large and unusually round-cornered with dark red spots that gleamed like real rubies, but the spots were arranged in such a way that each face looked like a miniature skull. For instance, the seven thrown just now, by which the Big Mushroom to his right had lost his point, which had been ten, consisted of a two with the spots evenly spaced toward one side, like eyes, instead of toward opposite corners, and of a five with the same red eye-spots but also a central red nose and two spots close together below that to make teeth.

The long, skinny, white-gloved arm of the dice-girl snaked out like an albino cobra and scooped up the dice and whisked them onto the rim of the table right in front of Joe. He inhaled silently, picked up a single chip from his table and started to lay it beside the dice, then realized that wasn't the way things were done here, and put it back. He would have liked to examine the chip more closely, though. It was curiously lightweight and pale tan, about the color of cream with a shot of coffee in it, and it had embossed on its surface a symbol he could feel, though not see. He didn't know what the symbol was, that would have taken more feeling. Yet its touch had been very good, setting the power tingling full blast in his shooting hand.

Joe looked casually yet swiftly at the faces around the table, not missing the Big Gambler across from him, and said quietly, "Roll a penny," meaning of course one pale chip, or a dollar.

There was a hiss of indignation from all the Big Mushrooms and the moonface of big-bellied Mr. Bones grew purple as he started forward to summon his bouncers.

The Big Gambler raised a black-satined forearm and sculptured hand, palm down. Instantly Mr. Bones froze and the hissing stopped faster than that of a meteor prick in self-sealing space steel. Then in a whispery, cultured voice, without the faintest hint of derision, the man in black said, "Get on him, gamblers."

Here, Joe thought, was a final confirmation of his suspicion, had it been needed. The really great gamblers were always perfect gentlemen and generous to the poor.

With only the tiny, respectful hint of a guffaw, one of the Big Mushrooms called to Joe, "You're faded."

Joe picked up the ruby-featured dice.

Now ever since he had first caught two eggs on one plate, won all the marbles in Ironmine, and juggled six alphabet blocks so they finally fell in a row on the rug spelling "Mother," Joe Slattermill had been almost incredibly deft at precision throwing. In the mine he could carom a rock off a wall of ore to crack a rat's skull fifty feet away in the dark and he sometimes amused himself by tossing little fragments of rock back into the holes from which they had fallen, so that they stuck there, perfectly fitted in, for at least a second. Sometimes, by fast tossing, he could fit seven or eight fragments into the hole from which they had fallen, like putting together a puzzle block. If he could ever have got into space, Joe would undoubtedly have been able to pilot six Moonskimmers at once and do figure eights through Saturn's rings blindfold.

Now the only real difference between precision-tossing rocks or alphabet blocks and dice is that you have to bounce the latter off the end wall of a crap table, and that just made it a more interesting test of skill for Joe.

Rattling the dice now, he felt the power in his fingers and palm as never before.

He made a swift low roll, so that the bones ended up exactly in front of the white-gloved dice-girl. His natural seven was made up, as he'd intended, of a four and a three. In red-spot features they were like the five, except that both had only one tooth and the three no nose. Sort of baby-faced skulls. He had won a penny—that is, a dollar.

"Roll two cents," said Joe Slattermill.

This time, for variety, he made his natural with an eleven. The six was like the five, except it had three teeth, the best-looking skull of the lot.

"Roll a nickel less one."

Two Big Mushrooms divided that bet with a covert smirk at each other.

Now Joe rolled a three and an ace. His point was four. The ace, with its single spot off center toward a side, still somehow looked like a skull -maybe of a Lilliputian Cyclops.

He took a while making his point, once absent-mindedly rolling three successive tens the hard way. He wanted to watch the dice-girl scoop up the cubes. Each time it seemed to him that her snake-swift fingers went under the dice while they were still flat on the felt. Finally he decided it couldn't be an illusion. Although the dice couldn't penetrate the felt, her white-gloved fingers somehow could, dipping in a flash through the black, diamond-sparkling material as if it weren't there.

Right away the thought of a crap-table-size hole through the earth came back to Joe. This would mean that the dice were rolling and lying on a perfectly transparent flat surface, impenetrable for them but nothing else. Or maybe it was only the dice-girl's hands that could penetrate the surface, which would turn into a mere fantasy Joe's earlier vision of a cleaned-out gambler taking the Big Dive down that dreadful shaft, which made the deepest mine a mere pin dent.

Joe decided he had to know which was true. Unless absolutely unavoidable, he didn't want to take the chance of being troubled by vertigo at some crucial stage of the game.

He made a few more meaningless throws, from time to time crooning for realism, "Come on, Little Joe." Finally he settled on his plan. When he did at last make his point—the hard way, with two twos—he caromed the dice off the far corner so that they landed exactly in front of him. Then, after a minimum pause for his throw to be seen by the table, he shot his left hand down under the cubes, just a flicker ahead of the dice-girl's strike, and snatched them up.

Wow! Joe had never had a harder time in his life making his face and manner conceal what his body felt, not even when the wasp had stung him on the neck just as he had

been for the first time putting his hand under the skirt of his prudish, fickle, demanding Wife-to-be. His fingers and the back of his hand were in as much agony as if he'd stuck them into a blast furnace. No wonder the dice-girl wore white gloves. They must be asbestos And a good thing he hadn't used his shooting hand, he thought as he ruefully watched the blisters rise.

He remembered he'd been taught in school what Twenty-Mile Mine also demonstrated: that the earth was fearfully hot under its crust. The crap-table-size hole must pipe up that heat, so that any gambler taking the Big Dive would fry before he'd fallen a furlong and come out less than a cinder in China.

As if his blistered hand weren't bad enough, the Big Mushrooms were all hissing at him again and Mr. Bones had purpled once more and was opening his melon-size mouth to shout for his bouncers.

Once again a lift of the Big Gambler's hand saved Joe. The whispery, gentle voice called, "Tell him, Mr. Bones."

The latter roared toward Joe, "No gambler may pick up the dice he or any other gambler has shot. Only my dice-girl may do that. Rule of the house!"

Joe snapped Mr. Bones the barest nod. He said coolly, "Rolling a dime less two," and when that still peewee bet was covered, he shot Phoebe for his point and then fooled around for quite a while, throwing anything but a five or a seven, until the throbbing in his left hand should fade and all his nerves feel rock-solid again. There had never been the slightest alteration in the power in his right hand; he felt that strong as ever, or stronger.

Midway of this interlude, the Big Gambler bowed slightly but respectfully toward Joe, hooding those unfathomable eye sockets, before turning around to take a long black cigarette from his prettiest and evilest-looking sporting girl. Courtesy in the smallest matters, Joe thought, another mark of the master devotee of games of chance. The Big Gambler sure had himself a flash crew, all right, though in idly looking them over again as he rolled, Joe noted one bummer

toward the back who didn't fit in –a raggedy-elegant chap with the elflocked hair and staring eyes and TB-spotted cheeks of a poet.

As he watched the smoke trickling up from under the black slouch hat, he decided that either the lights across the table had dimmed or else the Big Gambler's complexion was yet a shade darker than he'd thought at first. Or it might even be—wild fantasy—that the Big Gambler's skin was slowly darkening tonight, like a meerschaum pipe being smoked a mile a second. That was almost funny to think of—there was enough heat in this place, all right, to darken meerschaum, as Joe knew from sad experience, but so far as he was aware it was all under the table.

None of Joe's thoughts, either familiar or admitting, about the Big Gambler decreased in the slightest degree his certainty of the supreme menace of the man in black and his conviction that it would be death to touch him. And if any doubts had stirred in Joe's mind, they would have been squelched by the chilling incident which next occurred.

The Big Gambler had just taken into his arms his prettiest-evilest sporting girl and was running an aristocratic hand across her haunch with perfect gentility, when the poet chap, green-eyed from jealousy and lovesickness, came leaping forward like a wildcat and aimed a long gleaming dagger at the black satin back

Joe couldn't see how the blow could miss, but without taking his genteel right hand off the sporting girl's plush rear end, the Big Gambler shot out his left arm like a steel spring straightening. Joe couldn't tell whether he stabbed the poet chap in the throat, or judo-chopped him there, or gave him the Martian double-finger, or just touched him, but anyhow the fellow stopped as dead as if he'd been shot by a silent elephant gun or an invisible ray pistol and he slammed down on the floor. A couple of darkies came running up to drag off the body and nobody paid the least attention, such episodes apparently being taken for granted at The Boneyard.

It gave Joe quite a turn and he almost shot Phoebe before he intended to.

But by now the waves of pain had stopped running up his left arm and his nerves were like metal-wrapped new guitar strings, so three rolls later he shot a five, making his point, and set in to clean out the table.

He rolled nine successive naturals, seven sevens and two elevens, pyramiding his first wager of a single chip to a stake of over four thousand dollars. None of the Big Mushrooms had dropped out yet, but some of them were beginning to look worried and a couple were sweating. The Big Gambler still hadn't covered any part of Joe's bets, but he seemed to be following the play with interest from the cavernous depths of his eye sockets.

Then Joe got a devilish thought. Nobody could beat him tonight, he knew, but if he held onto the dice until the table was cleaned out, he'd never get a chance to see the Big Gambler exercise *his* skill, and he was truly curious about that. Besides, he thought, he ought to return courtesy for courtesy and have a crack at being a gentleman himself.

"Pulling out forty-one dollars less a nickel," he announced "Rolling a penny."

This time there wasn't any hissing and Mr. Bone's moonface didn't cloud over. But Joe was conscious that the Big Gambler was staring at him disappointedly, or sorrowfully, or maybe just speculatively.

Joe immediately crapped out by throwing boxcars, rather pleased to see the two best-looking tiny skulls grinning ruby-toothed side by side, and the dice passed to the Big Mushroom on his left.

"Knew when his streak was over," he heard another Big Mushroom mutter with grudging admiration.

The play worked rather rapidly around the table, nobody getting very hot and the stakes never more than medium high. "Shoot a fin." "Rolling a sawbuck." "An Andrew Jackson." "Rolling thirty bucks." Now and then Joe covered part of a bet, winning more than he lost. He had over seven thousand dollars, real money, before the bones got around to the Big Gambler.

That one held the dice for a long moment on his statue-

steady palm while he looked at them reflectively, though not the hint of a furrow appeared in his almost brownish forehead down which never a bead of sweat trickled. He murmured, "Rolling a double sawbuck," and when he had been faded, he closed his fingers, lightly rattled the cubes—the sound was like big seeds inside a small gourd only half dry—and negligently cast the dice toward the end of the table.

It was a throw like none Joe had ever seen before at any crap table. The dice traveled flat through the air without turning over, struck the exact juncture of the tables end and bottom, and stopped there dead, showing a natural seven.

Joe was distinctly disappointed. On one of his own throws he was used to calculating something like, "Launch three-up, five north, two and a half rolls in the air, hit on the six-five-three corner, three-quarter roll and a one-quarter side-twist right, hit end on the one-two edge, one-half reverse role and three-quarter side-twist left, land on five face, roll over twice, come up two," and that would be for just one of the dice, and a really commonplace throw, without extra bounces.

By comparison, the technique of the Big Gambler had been ridiculously, abysmally, horrifyingly simple. Joe could have duplicated it with the greatest ease, of course. It was no more than an elementary form of his old pastime of throwing fallen rocks back into their holes. But Joe had never once thought of pulling such a babyish trick at the crap table. It would make the whole thing too easy and destroy the beauty of the game.

Another reason Joe had never used the trick was that he'd never dreamed he'd be able to get away with it. By all the rules he'd ever heard of, it was a most questionable throw. There was the possibility that one or the other die hadn't completely reached the end of the table, or lay a wee bit cocked against the end. Besides, he reminded himself, weren't both dice supposed to rebound off the end, if only for a fraction of an inch?

However, as far as Joe's very sharp eyes could see, both

dice lay perfectly flat and sprang up against the end wall. Moreover, everyone else at the table seemed to accept the throw, the dice-girl had scooped up the cubes, and the Big Mushrooms who had faded the man in black were paying off. As far as the rebound business went, well, The Boneyard appeared to put a slightly different interpretation on that rule, and Joe believed in never questioning House Rules except in dire extremity—both his Mother and Wife had long since taught him it was the least troublesome way.

Besides, there hadn't been any of his own money riding on that roll.

In a voice like wind through Cypress Hollow or on Mars, the Big Gambler announced, "Roll a century." It was the biggest bet yet tonight, ten thousand dollars, and the way the Big Gambler said it made it seem something more than that. A hush fell on The Boneyard, they put the mutes on the jazz horns, the croupiers' calls became more confidential, the cards fell softlier, even the roulette balls seemed to be trying to make less noise as they rattled into their cells. The crowd around the Number One Crap Table quietly thickened. The Big Gambler's flash boys and girls formed a double semicircle around him, ensuring him lots of elbow room.

That century bet, Joe realized, was thirty bucks more than his own entire pile. Three or four of the Big Mushrooms had to signal each other before they'd agreed how to fade it.

The Big Gambler shot another natural seven with exactly the same flat, stop-dead throw.

He bet another century and did it again.

And again.

And again.

Joe was getting mighty concerned and pretty indignant too. It seemed unjust that the Big Gambler should be winning such huge bets with such machinelike, utterly unromantic rolls. Why, you couldn't even call them rolls, the dice never turned over an iota, in the air or after. It was the sort of thing you'd expect from a robot, and a very dully programed robot at that. Joe hadn't risked any of his own

chips fading the Big Gambler, of course, but if things went on like this he'd have to. Two of the Big Mushrooms had already retired sweatingly from the table, confessing defeat, and no one had taken their places. Pretty soon there'd be a bet the remaining Big Mushrooms couldn't entirely cover between them, and then he'd have to risk some of his own chips or else pull out of the game himself -and he couldn't do that, not with the power surging in his right hand like chained lightning.

Joe waited and waited for someone else to question one of the Big Gambler's shots, but no one did. He realized that, despite his efforts to look imperturbable, his face was slowly reddening.

With a little lift of his left hand, the Big Gambler stopped the dice-girl as she was about to snatch at the cubes. The eyes that were like black wells directed themselves at Joe, who forced himself to look back into them steadily. He still couldn't catch the faintest gleam in them. All at once he felt the lightest touch-on-neck of a dreadful suspicion.

With the utmost civility and amiability, the Big Gambler whispered, "I believe that the fine shooter across from me has doubts about the validity of my last throw, though he is too much of a gentleman to voice them. Lottie, the card test."

The wraith-tall, ivory dice-girl plucked a playing card from below the table and with a venomous flash of her little white teeth spun it low across the table through the air at Joe. He caught the whirling pasteboard and examined it briefly. It was the thinnest, stiffest, flattest, shiniest playing card Joe had ever handled. It was also the Joker, if that meant anything. He spun it back lazily into her hand and she slid it very gently, letting it descend by its own weight, down the end wall against which the two dice lay. It came to rest in the tiny hollow their rounded edges made against the black felt. She deftly moved it about without force, demonstrating that there was no space between either of the cubes and the table's end at any point.

"Satisfied?" the Big Gambler asked. Rather against his

will Joe nodded. The Big Gambler bowed to him. The dice-girl smirked her short, thin lips and drew herself up, flaunting her white-china-doorknob breasts at Joe.

Casually, almost with an air of boredom, the Big Gambler returned to his routine of shooting a century and making a natural seven. The Big Mushrooms wilted fast and one by one tottered away from the table. A particularly pink-faced Toadstool was brought extra cash by a gasping runner, but it was no help, he only lost the additional centuries. While the stacks of pale and black chips beside the Big Gambler grew skyscraper-tall.

Joe got more and more furious and frightened. He watched like a hawk or spy satellite the dice nesting against the end wall, but never could spot justification for calling for another card test, or nerve himself to question the House Rules at this late date. It was maddening, in fact insanitizing, to know that if only he could get the cubes once more he could shoot circles around that black pillar of sporting aristocracy. He damned himself a googelplex of ways for the idiotic, conceited, suicidal impulse that had led him to let go of the bones when he'd had them.

To make matters worse, the Big Gambler had taken to gazing steadily at Joe with those eyes like coal mines. Now he made three rolls running without even glancing at the dice or the end wall, as far as Joe could tell. Why, he was getting as bad as Joe's Wife or Mother—watching, watching, watching Joe.

But the constant staring of those eyes that were not eyes was mostly throwing a terrific scare into him. Supernatural terror added itself to his certainty of the deadliness of the Big Gambler. Just who, Joe kept asking himself, had he got into a game with tonight? There was curiosity and there was dread—a dreadful curiosisty as strong as his desire to get the bones and win. His hair rose and he was all over goose bumps, though the power was still pulsing in his hand like a braked locomotive or a rocket wanting to lift from the pad.

At the same time the Big Gambler stayed just that—a

black satin-coated, slouch-hatted elegance, suave, courtly, lethal. In fact, almost the worst thing about the spot Joe found himself in was that, after admitting the Big Gambler's perfect sportsmanship all night, he must now be disenchanted by his machinelike throwing and try to catch him out on any technicality he could.

The remorseless mowing down of the Big Mushrooms went on. The empty spaces outnumbered the Toadstools. Soon there were only three left.

The Boneyard had grown still as Cypress Hollow or the Moon. The Jazz had stopped and the gay laughter and the shuffle of feet and the squeak of goosed girls and the clink of drinks and coins. Everybody seemed to be gathered around the Number One Crap Table, rank on silent rank.

Joe was racked by watchfulness, sense of injustice, self-contempt, wild hopes, curiosity and dread. Especially the last two.

The complexion of the Big Gambler, as much as you could see of it, continued to darken For one wild moment Joe found himself wondering if he'd got into a game with a nigger, maybe a witchcraft-drenched Voodoo Man whose white make-up was wearing off.

Pretty soon there came a century wager which the two remaining Big Mushrooms couldn't fade between them. Joe had to make up a sawbuck from his miserably tiny pile or get out of the game. After a moment's agonizing hesitation, he did the former.

And lost his ten.

The two Big Mushrooms reeled back into the hushed crowd.

Pit-black eyes bored into Joe. A whisper: "Rolling your pile."

Joe felt well up in him the shameful impulse to confess himself licked and run home. At least his six thousand dollars would make a hit with his Wife and Ma.

But he just couldn't bear to think of the crowd's laughter, or the thought of living with himself knowing that he'd had a final chance, however slim, to challenge the Big Gambler and passed it up.

He nodded.

The Big Gambler shot. Joe leaned out over and down the table, forgetting his vertigo, as he followed the throw with eagle or space-telescope eyes.

"Satisfied?"

Joe knew he ought to say, "Yes," and slink off with head held as high as he could manage. It was the gentlemanly thing to do. But then he reminded himself that he wasn't a gentleman, but just a dirty, working-stiff miner with a talent for precision hurling.

He also knew that it was probably very dangerous for him to say anything but, "Yes," surrounded as he was by enemies and strangers. But then he asked himself what right had he, a miserable, mortal, homebound failure, to worry about danger.

Besides, one of the ruby-grinning dice looked just the tiniest hair out of line with the other.

It was the biggest effort yet of Joe's life, but he swallowed and managed to say, "No. Lottie, the card test."

The dice-girl fairly snarled and reared up and back as if she were going to spit in his eyes, and Joe had a feeling her spit was cobra venom. But the Big Gambler lifted a finger at her in reproof and she skimmed the card at Joe, yet so low and viciously that it disappeared under the black felt for an instant before flying up into Joe's hand.

It was hot to the touch and singed a pale brown all over, though otherwise unimpaired. Joe gulped and spun it back high.

Sneering poisoned daggers at him, Lottie let it glide down the end wall . . . and after a moment's hesitation, it slithered behind the die Joe had suspected.

A bow and then the whisper: "You have sharp eyes, sir. Undoubtedly that die failed to reach the wall. My sincerest apologies and . . . your dice, sir."

Seeing the cubes sitting on the black rim in front of him almost gave Joe apoplexy. All the feelings racking him, including his curiosity, rose to an almost unbelievable pitch of intensity, and when he'd said, "Rolling my pile," and the Big

Gambler had replied, "You're faded," he yielded to an uncontrollable impulse and cast the two dice right at the Big Gambler's ungleaming, midnight eyes.

They went right through into the Big Gambler's skull and bounced around inside there, rattling like big seeds in a big gourd not quite yet dry.

Throwing out a hand, palm back, to either side, to indicate that none of his boys or girls or anyone else must make a reprisal on Joe, the Big Gambler dryly gargled the two cubical bones, then spat them out so that they landed in the center of the table, the one die flat, the other leaning against it.

"Cocked dice, sir," he whispered as graciously as if no indignity whatever had been done him. "Roll again."

Joe shook the dice reflectively, getting over the shock. After a little bit he decided that though he could now guess the Big Gambler's real name, he'd still give him a run for his money.

A little corner of Joe's mind wondered how a live skeleton hung together. Did the bones still have gristle and thews, were they wired, was it done with force-fields, or was each bone a calcium magnet clinging to the next?—this tying in somehow with the generation of the deadly ivory electricity.

In the great hush of The Boneyard, someone cleared his throat, a Scarlet Woman tittered hysterically, a coin fell from the nakedest change girl's tray with a golden clink and rolled musically across the floor.

"Silence," the Big Gambler commanded and in a movement almost too fast to follow whipped a hand inside the bosom of his coat and out to the crap table's rim in front of him. A short-barreled silver revolver lay softly gleaming there. "Next creature, from the humblest nigger night-girl to you, Mr. Bones, who utters a sound while my worthy opponent rolls, gets a bullet in the head."

Joe gave him a courtly bow back, it felt funny, and then decided to start his run with a natural seven made up of an ace and a six. He rolled and this time the Big Gambler, judging from the movements of his skull, closely followed

the course of the cubes with his eyes that weren't there.

The dice landed, rolled over, and lay still. Incredulously, Joe realized that for the first time in his crap-shooting life he'd made a mistake. Or else there was a power in the Big Gambler's gaze greater than that in his own right hand. The six cube had come down okay, but the ace had taken an extra half roll and come down six too.

"End of the game," Mr. Bones boomed sepulchrally. The Big Gambler raised a brown skeletal hand. "Not necessarily," he whispered. His black eyepits aimed themselves at Joe like the mouths of seige guns. "Joe Slattermill, you still have something of value to wager, if you wish. Your life."

At that a giggling and a hysterical tittering and a guffawing and a braying and a shrieking burst uncontrollably out of the whole Boneyard. Mr. Bones summed up the sentiments when he bellowed over the rest of the racket, "Now what use or value is there in the life of a bummer like Joe Slattermill? Not two cents, ordinary money."

The Big Gambler laid a hand on the revolver gleaming before him and all the laughter died.

"I have a use for it," the Big Gambler whispered "Joe Slattermill, on my part I will venture all my winnings of tonight, and throw in the world and everything in it for a side bet. You will wager your life, and on the side your soul. You to roll the dice. What's your pleasure?"

Joe Slattermill quailed, but then the drama of the situation took hold of him. He thought it over and realized he certainly wasn't going to give up being stage center in a spectacle like this to go home broke to his Wife and Mother and decaying house and the dispirited Mr. Guts. Maybe, he told himself, encouragingly, there wasn't a power in the Big Gambler's gaze, maybe Joe had just made his one and only crap-shooting error. Besides, he was more inclined to accept Mr. Bones's assessment of the value of his life than the Big Gambler's.

"It's a bet," he said

"Lottie, give him the dice."

Joe concentrated his mind as never before, the power

tingled triumphantly in his hand, and he made his throw.

The dice never hit the felt. They went swooping down, then up, in a crazy curve far out over the end of the table, and then came streaking back like tiny red-glinting meteors toward the face of the Big Gambler, where they suddenly nested and hung in his black eye sockets, each with the single red gleam of an ace showing.

Snake eyes.

The whisper, as those red-glinting dice-eyes stared mockingly at him: "Joe Slattermill, you've crapped out."

Using thumb and middle finger—or bone rather—of either hand, the Big Gambler removed the dice from his eye sockets and dropped them in Lottie's white-gloved hand.

"Yes, you've crapped out, Joe Slattermill," he went on tranquilly. "And now you can shoot yourself"—he touched the silver gun—"or cut your throat"—he whipped a gold-handled bowie knife out of his coat and laid it beside the revolver—"or poison yourself"—the two weapons were joined by a small black bottle with white skull and cross-bones on it—"or Miss Flossie here can kiss you to death." He drew forward beside him his prettiest, evilest-looking sporting girl. She preened herself and flounced her short violet skirt and gave Joe a provocative, hungry look, lifting her carmine upper lip to show her long white canines.

"Or else," the Big Gambler added, nodding significantly toward the black-bottomed crap table, "you can take the Big Dive."

Joe said evenly, "I'll take the Big Dive."

He put his right foot on his empty chip table, his left on the black rim, fell forward . . . and suddenly kicking off from the rim, launched himself in a tiger spring straight across the crap table at the Big Gambler's throat, solacing himself with the thought that certainly the poet chap hadn't seemed to suffer long.

As he flashed across the exact center of the table he got an instant photograph of what really lay below, but his brain had no time to develop that snapshot, for the next instant he was plowing into the Big Gambler.

Stiffened brown palm edge caught him in the temple with a lightninglike judo chop . . . and the brown fingers or bones flew all apart like puff pastry. Joe's left hand went through the Big Gambler's chest as if there were nothing there but black satin coat, while his right hand, straightarmedly clawing at the slouch-hatted skull, crunched it to pieces. Next instant Joe was sprawled on the floor with some black clothes and brown fragments.

He was on his feet in a flash and snatching at the Big Gambler's tall stacks. He had time for one left-handed grab. He couldn't see any gold or silver or any black chips, so he stuffed his left pants pocket with a handful of the pale chips and ran.

Then the whole population of The Boneyard was on him and after him. Teeth, knives and brass knuckles flashed. He was punched, clawed, kicked, tripped and stamped on with spike heels. A gold-plated trumpet with a bloodshot-eyed black face behind it bopped him on the head. He got a white flash of the golden dice-girl and made a grab for her, but she got away. Someone tried to mash a lighted cigar in his eye. Lottie, writhing and flailing like a white boa constrictor, almost got a simultaneous strangle hold and scissors on him. From a squat wide-mouth bottle Flossie, snarling like a feline fiend, threw what smelt like acid past his face. Mr. Bones peppered shots around him from the silver revolver. He was stabbed at, gouged, rabbit-punched, scragmauled, slugged, kneed, bitten, bearhugged, butted, beaten and had his toes trampled.

But somehow none of the blows or grabs had much real force. It was like fighting ghosts. In the end it turned out that the whole population of The Boneyard, working together, had just a little more strength than Joe. He felt himself being lifted by a multitude of hands and pitched out through the swinging doors so that he thudded down on his rear end on the board sidewalk. Even that didn't hurt much. It was more like a kick of encouragement.

He took a deep breath and felt himself over and worked his bones He didn't seem to have suffered any serious dam-

age. He stood up and looked around. The Boneyard was dark and silent as the grave, or the planet Pluto, or all the rest of Ironmine. As his eyes got accustomed to the starlight and occasional roving spaceship-gleam, he saw a padlocked sheet-iron door where the swinging ones had been.

He found he was chewing on something crusty that he'd somehow carried in his right hand all the way through the final fracas. Mighty tasty, like the bread his Wife baked for best customers. At that instant his brain developed the photograph it had taken when he had glanced down as he flashed across the center of the crap table. It was a thin wall of flames moving sideways across the table and just beyond the flames the faces of his Wife, Mother, and Mr. Guts, all looking very surprised. He realized that what he was chewing was a fragment of the Big Gambler's skull, and he remembered the shape of the three loaves his Wife had started to bake when he left the house. And he understood the magic she'd made to let him get a little ways away and feel half a man, and then come diving home with his fingers burned.

He spat out what was in his mouth and pegged the rest of the bit of giant-popover skull across the street.

He fished in his left pocket. Most of the pale poker chips had been mashed in the fight, but he found a whole one and explored its surface with his fingertips. The symbol embossed on it was a cross. He lifted it to his lips and took a bite. It tasted delicate, but delicious. He ate it and felt his strength revive. He patted his bulging left pocket. At least he'd start out well provisioned.

Then he turned and headed straight for home, but he took the long way, around the world.

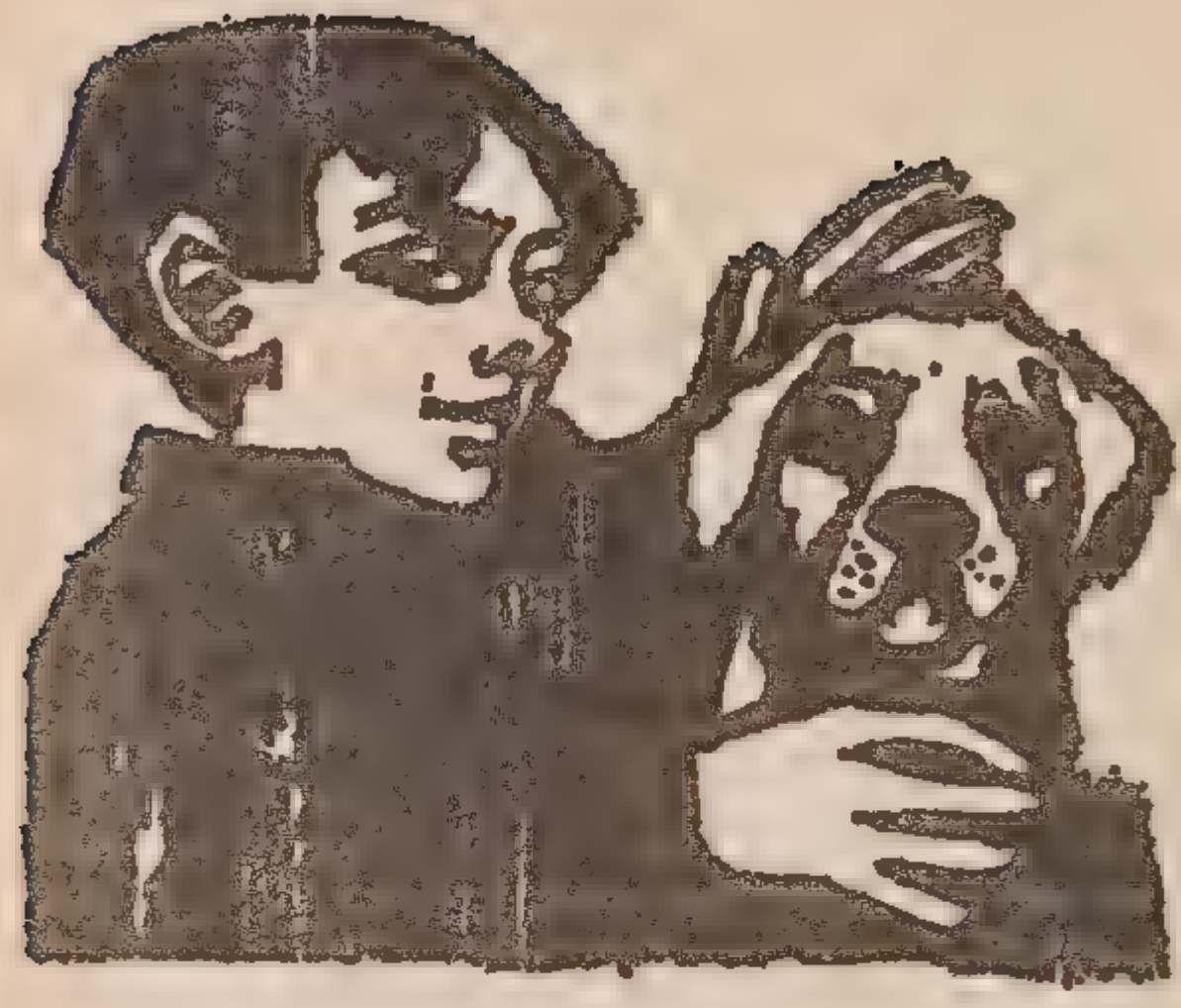
Afterword:

The story of the bogeyman is the oldest and best in the world, because it is the story of courage, of fear vanquished by knowledge gained by plunging into the unknown at risk or seeming risk: the discovery that the terrifying white

figure is nothing but a man with a sheet over his head, or perhaps a black man smeared with white ashes. Primitive tribes such as the Australian aborigines ritualized the bogeyman story in their initiation ceremonies for boys and today we need it as much as ever. For the modern American male, as for Joe Slattermill, the ultimate bogey may turn out to be the Mom figure: domineering-dependent Wife or Mother, exaggerating their claims on him beyond all reason and bound. Science itself is a battle against such bogeys as Cancer Is Incurable, Sex Is Filthy, Backbreaking Toil Is Man's Lot Forever, People Can't Fly, the Stars Are Out of Reach, Man Was Not Meant to Know (or Do) This, That, or The Other. At least that was how I was feeling when I wrote "Gonna Roll the Bones."

I chose the American tall tale as a form (or it chose me) because the space age precision-fits the wild credulity-straining exploits of legendary figures such as Mike Fink, Pecos Pete, Tony Beaver, the steel-driving John Henry, and the space-striding though dubious Paul Bunyan, one quarter genuine north-woods article, three quarters twentieth century invention. I got a kick out of making a final story point out of the elementary proposition in solid geometry that between any two points on a sphere like Earth there are always two straight or direct great-circle routes, even if one is only a mile long and the other 24,000. A wild talent for crap shooting isn't just a gambler's dream; psycho-kinesis exercised on dice has long been a field of experimental inquiry among university researchers into extrasensory perception. I enjoyed pumping the lingo of dice for its poetry and mixing space flight with witchcraft, which is just another word for the powers of self-hypnotism, prayer, suggestion and the whole subconscious mind. It's a mistake to think that science fiction is an off-trail and posted literary area; it can be an ingredient of any sort of fiction, just as science and technology today enter into our lives at every point.

LORD RANDY, MY SON



Introduction to

LORD RANDY, MY SON:

We were plunging *up* a dangerously twisting valley road in Madison, Indiana. The tires squealed like shoats and I cowered in a far-right corner of the front seat. It was a *big* car, and he continually executed four-wheel drifts around curves that sent the back wheels over the edge. I got one clear view down into the green and handsome valley in which Madison nestled as we tipped precariously, and he accelerated going into another turn. Behind us, I suddenly heard the growler of an Indiana State Trooper as his gumball machine flashed a warning red. He was coming up on us fast. The speed limit was twenty on these lunatic curves, but the lunatic behind the wheel was doing almost seventy. I was grateful for the fuzz coming up on us; I might spend the night in the slammer as unwilling accomplice to the driver, but by God I'd be alive to be arraigned. The driver could clearly see the fuzzmobile in his rear-view, but he didn't seem to give a damn. He floored the accelerator and the big sedan surged around another curve. I think I screamed. (Most unusual for me. I used to drive a dynamite truck in North Carolina, than whose road there are none twistier, and I'm not easily shook. But aside from Norman Spinrad's driving, I'm a good passenger, also having raced sports cars. But *this* time . . .)

Finally we mounted the crest of the hill and the big sedan let out full. Around 110 I yowled for the driver to stop before that bloody Indiana cop sailed right up our tailpipe. He grinned lopsidedly—which is the *only* way he can smile—and hit the brakes. We slewed to a stop, half into the oncoming lane, and I collapsed against the seat. The fuzzmobile jazzed in and around us, barely missing us, and locked brakes. The whipcord cop came on the run, his face spotted with fury.

He took seven-league strides and was shrieking even before he got his head in the window. His gun was drawn. "You dumb sonofabitch!" he yelled, the throat cords standing out in cunning relief. "You know how fast you were goin', you ignorant goddam clown? You know you coulda killed me and you and everybody else on this goddam road, you goddam dumb'. . . oh, hi, Joe."

He grinned and holstered the big-barreled weapon. "Sorry, Joe, didn't recognize you." He grinned hugely, shrugged his shoulders as if he knew it was the Natural Order, and walked away. He pulled out fast, Joe slipped it into drive and burned rubber following him. "Friend of mine," said Joe L. Hensley. Grinning lopsidedly. I think I fainted.

Carol Carr says Joe L. Hensley is a teddy bear. Sure he is.

Change of scene: Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1958. I am standing in front of the Captain, CO of my infantry company. He is very unhappy with me. I have hornswoggled him. I have been living out of the barracks in a trailer for the past six months though I'm no longer married, which he has only recently found out. He is furious with me. I have broken every rule imaginable in his company. He hates me a lot. He is yelling that he will see my ass in Leavenworth, and he means it. I suddenly break and run, dashing out of his office, through the orderly room, down the hall, and into the day room. I get into the phone booth and close the door, pulling the receiver with me. The slatwood lower half of the booth hides me from sight. I get my number in Madison. "Joe!" I howl. "They're tryin' to railroad me. . . . HALP, JOE!" They have located me now, they are trying to get into the booth. I have my leg locked in position, holding it closed. They take a fire ax and break the glass They drag me out; I'm still clutching the receiver screaming, "HALP, JOE!" They haul me back into the Captain's office. He puts me under armed guard until the court-martial papers can be drawn up. "Your ass will die in Leavenworth!" shouts the Captain, becoming apoplectic.

Within two hours there are three, count 'em, *three* Congressional Inquiries on the Captain's desk. Why are you annoying Pfc Ellison? one of them says. Leave Pfc Ellison alone, a second one says. Pfc Ellison has *friends,* the third one warns. Then Stuart Symington's inquiry comes in, and the Captain knows he has been outgunned. He sentences me to one week washing barracks windows. My ass never sees the inside of Leavenworth. The Captain has a nervous breakdown and is sent to the Bahamas to recover, if possible. Joe L. Hensley is out there in Madison, Indiana, grinning lopsidedly.

Carol Carr says Joe L. Hensley is a pussycat. Better believe it.

Hensley is not to be believed. Legend-in-his-own-time kind of thing. He is one of the most gigantic men I've ever seen. Well over six foot six, he is solid meat from top to bottom, with a fuzzy crew cut that makes his head look like one of those plaster gimcracks you used to be able to buy in Woolworth's that you plant the grass seed in, and it grows out to look like Joe's crew cut. He has a face made of Silly Putty and he loves to twist it into imbecilic expressions, giving the impression he is a waterhead. It only serves to lull the opposition into a false sense of security. One night in a bar in Evansville, Indiana, Joe and I were braced by a pair of *lummoxen* who wanted to brawl. Joe got that cockeyed grin on his face, began making guttural sounds like Lenny in *Of Mice and Men* and burbled, "Sure, I'd like t'fight, uh-huh, sure, sure I would," and he went over to a brick wall and started pounding it with his "dead" hand—the one with the nerve ends dulled from having been scorched in a fire—until the bricks shattered and his hand was ripped and torn and bits of bone were sticking out through the torn skin and blood was all over the place. The two bully boys suddenly went very green, one of them murmured, "This guy is a nut!" and they fled in horror. I think I vomited.

All of which only begins to shade in the incredible personality of Hensley the Runamuck. Despite the fact that he is the very incarnation of Morgan/McMurphy/Yossarian/

Sebastian Dangerfield Gully Jimson all hoisted up into one petard, Hensley is a pillar of the community, a highly respected attorney whose political record reads as follows:

County attorney for Jefferson County, Indiana, in 1960; attorney for the Madison City Plan Commission from 1959 to 1962; elected to Indiana General Assembly in 1960, serving in 1961–62; chairman of the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission from 1961 to 1965; member of the Criminal Code Commission of the state of Indiana; elected prosecuting attorney of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the state of Indiana. In 1966 he ran for the legislature again in a five-county area and was shabbily defeated by 70 votes. It was possibly his coming out in favor of smut and pornography that turned the tide. It was called Bluenose Backlash.

Joe was born in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1926 and grew up there, and grew up and up and up and up. He attended Indiana University for both undergrad and law school work. He served two years overseas during Nastiness No. 2 in the South Pacific, and was recalled for sixteen delightful months during WW II 1/2, Korea. He is married to the lovely Charlotte (and she *gotta* be lovely for me to like her with a name like that, which was the name of my first wife, which is another story en*tire*ly) and has one child, Mike, age twelve.

I first met Hensley at a Midwestern Science Fiction Convention in the middle Fifties, and we have been chums ever since. There are those who contend we are the contemporary incarnation of the Rover Boys. Them as says it refuse to present themselves for personal attention by the deponents. Joe does not write nearly as much as he should. His talent is a natural, free-wheeling delight, kept in check chiefly by his analytical lawyer's mind. The emotional content of a Hensley story, however, is usually several points higher than most of the current scriveners' crop. I will let the madman speak in his own defense at this point:

"I began writing in 1951 and sold one of my early efforts to *Planet Stories*. Thereafter, I entered into an agreeable and

interesting relationship with them. I would write a story and *Planet* would buy it. I began selling to other magazines and have had sales to such magazines as *Swank* (with Harlan Ellison), *Rogue* (with Harlan Ellison), *Amazing Stories* (with Harlan Ellison), and to most of the science fiction and men's magazines, such as *Gent, Dapper* and others (without Harlan Ellison). A novel, *The Color of Hate,* was published in 1960; another, *Deliver Us to Evil,* is making the rounds; and a third, *Privileged Communication* (title suggested by Harlan Ellison), is under way, and will be completed this year.

"The story that follows I consider to be the best short story that I have written, ever. *Other than that, deponent saith not.*"

LORD RANDY, MY SON

by Joe L. Hensley

He rebelled on the night the call came to leave the warm and liquid place; but in that way he was weak and nature was strong. Outside, the rains came; a storm so formidable that forecasters referred to it for all of the time that was left. He fought to remain with the mother thing, but the mother thing expelled him and in fear and rage he hurt the mother thing subtly. Black clouds hid the stars and the trees bent only to the wind.

The night before, Sam Moore had let his son Randall play late in the yard – if "play" it was. The boy had no formal games and the neighborhood children shunned the area of the Moore house. Sometimes a child would yell at the boy insultingly from some hidden place, but mostly now they stayed away.

Sam sat in the chaise longue and watched dully, trapped in the self-pity of writing his own obituary, asking the timeless questions: Who were you? What did you ever do? And why me? Why me now?

He watched the child with concealed revulsion. Randall moved quietly along the back line of hedges, his small-boy eyes watchful of the other yards that bordered his own. There had been a time when it was a fetish with the neighbor children to fling a rock when passing, before the two Swiehart boys, running away after disposing of their missiles, had fallen into a well no one had ever known existed in the corner lot. Too bad about them, but Randall lived with the remembrance of the rocks and appeared to distrust the amnesty. Sam watched as the boy continued his patrol.

The pain within had been worse on that day and Sam longed for the forgetfulness of sleep.

Finally it was time.

The first one came in silence and the memories of that night are lost in time. That one grew easily and alone, for only later life is chronicled. His people migrated and memory flickered into a mass of legends. But the blood was there.

Item: The old man had gardened in the neighborhood for several years. He was a bent man with a soft, broken-toothed smile, bad English, and a remembrance of things past: swastikas, yellow stars, Buchenwald. Now and then he wrote simple poems and sent them to the local newspaper and once they had printed one. He was a friendly old man and he spoke to everyone, including one of the teenage, neighborhood queens. She chose to misunderstand him and reported his friendliness as something more.

On that day, a year gone now, the old man had been digging at rosebushes in the front yard of the house across the street. Randall had watched, sucking at a peppermint stick the old man had given him, letting the juice run from the corners of his mouth.

The black car had squealed to a stop and the three purposeful boys gotten out. They wore yellow sweaters. On the back of each sweater an eagle had been cunningly worked into the material so that the woven wings seemed to take

new flight as shoulders moved. Each boy carried a chain-saw band with a black taped handle. Randall watched them with growing interest, not really understanding yet.

They beat the old man with powerful, tackle-football arms and he had cowered away, crying out in a guttural, foreign tongue. It was over quickly. The old man lay crumpled and bleeding in the rich, dark dirt. The boys piled back into the black car and peeled away at high speed. Randall could hear the sounds of their laughter, like pennants fluttering after them.

Two blocks away the land was not suitable for building. There was a steep hill. The tire blew there and the black car went over the hill gaining speed. It cartwheeled down, spouting enormous geysers of flame, a miniature ferris wheel gone mad; and fire gushed out with an overpowering roaring sound that *almost* blocked out the screams.

In the morning Sam Moore awoke unrefreshed. On that Saturday the housekeeper-babysitter came on time for a change and he left them sitting in the family room. The television was blaring a bloody war movie, where men died in appalling numbers. Randall was seated, legs crossed, on the floor in front of the television, watching avidly. Mrs. Cable watched the screen and refused to meet Sam's glance, lost in her own bitter world. There'd been a time when Sam had issued instructions before leaving, but those days were gone. Not very many women would care for a retarded child. Now, enmeshed in his own problem, and really not caring much, he said little. If the watching was casual and the safety of the boy only probable . . . he had still carried out the formal, social necessities of child care.

He looked at the boy and something within him darkened. Ann had been brilliant and her pregnancy had been normal; but the birth had been difficult and the boy a monstrous problem. She had changed. The boy had not. Early tests on him had been negative, but physically there had always been a lack of interest, slow movement, eyes that could track and follow, but did not.

He could not force himself to approach the boy this morning.

"Good-by," he said, and received a brief look upward with minor recognition involved. A boy is only three once; but what happens when he is three and eight at the same time? When he will be three forever?

On the television screen a dark-skinned soldier dragged his white captain from the path of an onrushing tank. Sam remembered the script. It was one of Hollywood's message films. Comradeship would continue until the dark-skinned one needed another kind of help.

Outside, he failed to notice the loveliness of the day. He stood in front of the garage and considered. (With the rolling door down, the garage was tight. He could start the car and it would be easy. That was what Ann, his wife, had done, but for a different reason and in a different way. She'd swallowed a box of sleeping pills when he was out of town trying a case. That had been a long time ago after the hospitals and clinics, after the last of the faith healers with their larcenous, sickening morality, the confident, grasping herbalists, the slick charlatans and quacks to whom, in desperation, she'd taken the boy. Four years now. No one had examined Randall since.

(She'd never been really *there* after Randall was born. She'd wandered on for a while, large, sensitive eyes looking out from some faraway place, her mind a cluttered dustbin of what might have been.

("Just don't touch me," she had said. "I know they said we ought to have another, but don't. . . . Please, Sam." And that which was still partially alive in him had died. He knew it was the boy. Now . . . it wasn't that he'd not loved her, but he could recall her face only in the boy's face, in that small and hateful visage, that face that had killed the thing Sam loved.)

He rolled up the garage door with a clang, and drove to law office. Another day, perhaps another dollar. There weren't many days left now. Dr. Yancey had said six-months to a year and that had been more than four months

ago; on the day they had opened Sam Moore and quickly sutured him again to hide the corrupt mass inside.

"Too far along," Yancey had said, and then added the old words of despair that many men finally hear: "Nothing we can do."

Siddharta Gautama came easily in the park with the remembrance of elephants. Legends say that the trees bowed to him. His mother, Maya, felt sustained by an intense feeling of power. The blood was strong, but the child was slow and sheltered and the fulfillment never reached, the gift grown into vagueness, never fully used.

Item: Randall sat under a tree in front of the Moore house. He watched the world around him with curious intensity. A honey bee flew near and he watched the creature with some concern, but it did not attack. They didn't bother him much since that one had stung him in the spring, and he'd destroyed them all for a ten-block radius.

He could hear the loud noise long before he could tell from where it came. A sound truck blared close by. In a few moments it came to Randall's corner and slowed. On its side there was a garish picture of a man in priestly robes holding a rifle in front of his chest, eyes flashing fire. The sign below said: "Father Tempest Fights Communism." Music boomed over the speakers, decibels above the permitted limits. Randall held his ears. The sound hurt.

The driver cut the music back and turned up the volume for his hand microphone. "Big rally tonight!" he called. "Hear Father Tempest save the world and tell YOU how to fight the infiltrators who would destroy us. High school gym, seven o'clock." The voice took on a threatening note. "Don't let your neighbors be there without you." In the other seat beside the driver, a man in priestly robes smiled and made beneficent gestures as people came to doors and windows.

Overhead there were sudden clouds and a few drops of rain fell. Lightning bolted from the sky, missed the tall trees, and made a direct hit on the sound truck. Silence came and

Randall removed his hands from his ears. People ran into the street and, in a while, Randall could hear a siren.

He left the front yard and went to the window at the side. From there he could see Mrs. Cable. She had managed somehow to sleep through it all. Her mouth hung open and she snored with an easy rhythm. The television was still on, hot with a soap opera now.

Randall began to pace the back hedge fence, guarding it. There'd been one boy who appeared friendly and would smile at Randall and then slyly do little things of pinching and hitting when no one watched. That was the boy with the BB gun, who shot the squirrel that took the bits of food from Randall's hand, the boy who killed one of the fish in the fishpond. The squirrel still lived, but it was more cautious now. And there were still three fish in the pond. There had always been three, except for that one day. One of the fish now was not quite the same colour and shape as the others.

The big dog came into the yard through the hedge and they frisked together.

Randall smiled at the dog. "Nice dog," he said. A stump of tail waved in adoration.

Sam spent a dreary day in the office, snapping at his secretary, being remote to clients. Now he was not as busy as he'd once been. He refused cases that might drag. Partly it was the alien thing that grew inside, but partly—and he had a sort of sullen pride about it—there was the matter of being too good at his job. He'd surrounded himself with the job when Ann had gone, merged into it. Now he refused the proffered retainers to defend or prosecute that which he knew he wouldn't live to see. It was a minor, ethical point, but a man takes greater cognizance of minor points when he begins to die.

His own decisions grew harder to make and clients read it in his eyes and voice. The motley mob that had once invaded his office fell to a whisper and soon, there was time.

He thought about the boy. He knew he'd ignored the

child after Ann's death and, worse, he'd hated the boy, relating it back to Ann, knowing that her suicide was a product of what the boy was.

The newspaper offered escape. The world grew more sour daily and so seemed easier to leave. Today two more countries had quit the United Nations. Sweden reported increased fallout. There was indecisiveness over a new test ban. Two African nations announced the development of their own bombs. In Mississippi a member of a fanatical white organization had shot and killed a circuit judge who'd sentenced nine men accused and convicted of lynching a civil rights worker. In his own state an amendment to the state constitution outlawing the death penalty had lost by a wide margin.

On the way home there was an ache in his back that had never been there before.

Ching-tsai dreamed deeply on the night of coming. The chi-lin appeared to her. She dreamed and missed the dragons that walked the quiet skies. Once again the child was slow and sheltered and kept apart.

Item: Mrs. Cable slept on. Keeping away from prime time, which was reserved for westerns, giveaway shows, comedies and the like, the television presented a program on a housing development in New York. They showed the tenements that were being replaced; they showed the narrow streets and the tired and dirty people. Cameras cleverly watched as the buildings came down and high-rise, low-rent apartments were built. The reporter's voice was flat and laconic. Crime continued in the rebuilt area. The favourite now was to catch the rent collector in the elevator, strip him, and jam small change up his rectum. Rape increased, for the apartments were better soundproofed than the old tenements.

Randall watched. The people still looked tired and dirty.

After the documentary there was another soap opera. Mrs. Cable came awake and they watched together. This

one was about a man and woman who were in love and who were married, but unfortunately not to each other.

The house was hot and empty. Sam went to the open window and saw them. Mrs. Cable was stretched out on the chaise longue, a paper held over her eyes to block the fierce sun. Randall was at the goldfish pond that Sam had constructed in a happier year. Three hardy goldfish had outlived the last harsh winter and the indifferent spring. What they subsisted on, Sam could not guess. He knew that *he* didn't feed them.

The boy held small hands over the pool and Sam watched covertly. It was as if the child felt Sam's eyes on him, for he turned his head and smiled directly at the window. Then he turned again to the pool, trailing quick hands in the water. The right one came up gently grasping a goldfish. The boy passed it from hand to hand, inspecting it as it wriggled, then dropped it into the water and the hand sought another.

It was something that Sam had never seen before, but the boy did it with an air, as if it were an often-repeated act.

Randall had an affinity for animals. Sam remembered the incident of the dog. The back neighbors owned a large and cantankerous German shepherd that had been a neighborhood terror since acquisition. Once, when Randall made one of his periodic runaways, Sam had come upon the boy huddled against the dog. Sam stood watching, half expecting the animal, which its owners normally kept carefully chained, to rend and tear. But the dog made no overt move and only whined when Sam took the boy away.

Lately the dog's conduct must have improved with age, for Sam had seen it playing happily around the neighborhood.

He made up a check and took it out to Mrs. Cable. It paid her for the week and she took it with good grace. Payday was the only time she unbent and showed any real desire to talk.

"Lots of excitement," she said. "Lightning hit a truck

right down the street. I was asleep, but Mrs. Taldemp was telling me. Two men killed." She shook her head in wonder. "Right down the street and I missed it." She nodded at Randall. "He's coming along. He does things he didn't used to do. Those mean little ones that used to throw rocks don't come close any more. He used to try to run to them and give them his toys, but he just watches now if he sees one. They stay away when he's outside." She shook her head. "He still don't talk much, but sometimes he'll say something right out loud and clear when I ain't expecting it." She laughed her whinny laugh. "It's a shame nothing can be done for him. You still trying to get him in that state dumb school?"

Sam fought the pain inside. "Not much use," he said shortly. "They're full. He's way down the list to get in."

He escorted her to the front door. On most days she kept conversation to a minimum, but today she wouldn't run down.

"He's sure quick. There's a squirrel up in one of them trees. I turned my back and he was up there feeding it. I thought you said that old elm was rotten?"

Sam nodded. Every movement sent a wave of pain up his back.

"Well, he climbed up it and I had a dickens of a time getting him down. Don't seem rotten to me," she grumbled.

It was rotten. It had died this spring and never come out in leaves. Sam could see it vaguely out the back window. The other trees were in full leaf. He imagined that he could see buds and small leaves on the elm, but he knew he must be wrong.

He finally got Mrs. Cable out the door and called Doc Yancey. When that was done he eased gingerly into a chair. The pain receded slightly. The boy sat on the floor watching him with a child's curious intentness, head cocked slightly, completely without embarrassment. Sam admitted to himself that the boy was handsome. His features were regular, his body wiry and strong. Once Sam had visited the State Mentally Retarded Home and the eyes of the children there

were what he most remembered. Most those eyes had been dull and without luster. A few of the eyes had been foolers. Randall's eyes were foolers. They were bright with the brightness of cold snow, but they lacked involvement with the world around him.

"You hurt, Father?" Randall questioned. He made a tiny gesture with one hand, as if he were testifying and had found a sudden truth and was surprised by it. "You hurt, Father," he said again. He pointed out the window. "All hurt," he said.

"Yes," Sam said. "The whole world hurts."

The boy turned away as Sam heard the car in the drive. It was Dr. Yancey. The man came in with brisk steps and Sam had a moment of quick, consuming hatred for the other man; the solid, green envy of the sick for the well.

Dr. Yancey spoke first to the boy. "Hello, Randy. How are you today?"

For a moment Sam did not think the boy would answer.

Randall looked at the doctor without particular interest. "I am young," he said finally, in falsetto.

"He says that sometimes to people," Sam said. "I think he means he's all right."

Yancey went into the kitchen and brought back water and a yellow capsule. "This won't put you under." He handed the capsule and water to Sam and Sam downed them dutifully. He let Yancey help him from the chair to the couch. Expert fingers probed him. The boy watched with some interest.

"You're swollen, but there aren't any real signs of serious organ failure. You really ought to be in a hospital."

"Not yet," Sam said softly. "There's the boy." He looked up at Yancey. "How long, Doc?" He asked it not really wanting to know and yet wanting to know.

"Not very long now, Sam. I think the cancer's spread to the spine." He kept his voice low and turned to see if the boy was listening.

Randall got up from the floor. He moved quietly and

gracefully out of the room and down the hall. A light clicked on in the study.

"He's sort of unnerving," Sam said. "He'll go back in the study and get down some books and turn pages. I've got a good encyclopedia back there and some medical books I use in damage cases. I suppose he likes the pictures. Sometimes he spends hours back there."

Some say Ubu'l Kassim destroyed his father two months before the coming. The shock of death and birth weakened the mother thing and she died a few years after. His life was confused, moving from relative to relative, slow maturation. Something within him hid from the world until early manhood.

Item: The books were puzzling. There was so much in them that was so clearly wrong, but they were not cruel of themselves, only stupid and careless. He remembered the mother-thing and wondered why he had hurt her. The father-thing was hurt also, but he had not done that. There was no love in the father-thing, but the father-thing had never hurt him.

The books were no help.

Alone, unaided by what the world had become and what it meant to him, he made his decision. He made it for the one time and the one thing, putting the rest back, delaying.

The pill was effective for a few hours and then it began to wear off. He took another and checked the boy. Randall lay in his bed, small body lost in covers, breathing slowly, evenly, his eyes open.

"Where is the mother?" he asked.

There were two feelings. Sam had the desire to destroy the boy and an equal feeling to catch the child up and hold him close. He did neither. He rearranged the covers.

"She's gone far away," he said softly to the boy.

Randall nodded.

Sam straightened the study. The boy had been at his

books again. He put them back on the shelves. He went to his own bed. Sleep came quickly.

Outside, in the neighborhood, most lights were still on. People stared uneasily at their television screens. There was another confrontation, this time in the Near East. Hands moved closer to the red button, the button that man had made. The President spoke and tensions eased, for some. The world, for what it was and what all men had made it, would remain for a while.

For Sam there was a dream.

The faces of a thousand clients came and blended into one sick and ignorant and prejudiced face, a "never-had" and "never-will" face that whined the injustice of life as it spawned children to be supported by the myriad public doles. It was a face that Sam knew well, a face that pleaded for divorce and demanded alimony and plotted rape and confessed murder. It was a face that hated all minorities and majorities of which it was not the leading member, that cursed fate and defrauded welfare. Partly the face was familiar and he knew it, for it was his own face.

It was a dream built of fifteen years of practice. It was not a nightmare, for it was far better than life.

The dream fit life though, and at the moment of dreaming, if he could have made a rational choice, if the instinct for life had not been so strong and inbred, he would have chosen death.

He came almost to wakefulness once, but he slid back into the well where there was only one tiny circle of light. Ann and the boy were there. They touched him with soft hands. He turned them into the circle of life and their faces could be seen and those faces bore the same marks as his client-self face, cruel, sick, angry, and in pain. Their hands still touched him and he writhed to escape, revolted at the touch. With horrible pain and with tearing and burning he retched the gorge within him away.

He awoke.

Only one pair of hands was real.

Randall stood by the bed. The boy's hands were laid

lightly across the bed, resting and unmoving on Sam's chest. There was something in the boy's face, an awareness, a feeling. Sam could not read it all, but there was satisfaction and accomplishment and perhaps even love. Then expression wandered away. The boy yawned and removed his hands. He walked away and Sam soon heard the rustle of the silk comforter from the boy's bedroom.

A spasm of empty pain came. Sam got up weakly and made it to the kitchen and took another pill and sat for a while on the couch until it took effect. He came back past the boy's room and looked in. Randall lay straight in bed. There was a bright sheen of sweat on the child's forehead. His eyes were open, watching and waiting.

"I am young," the child said again, plaintively and to no one.

"Yes," Sam said softly. "So very young."

"There was a head thing," Randall said slowly, searching for words. "Hurt doggy." He reached a small finger out and laid it on Sam's wrist. "Fish always hungry. I gave to them." He shook his head. "See words, can't say them." Confidence came in his voice. "I will grow more quickly now." He moved his hands off Sam's wrist and closer to the abdomen. "All gone now. All gone every place," he said, and the look of Sam's bedroom came fleetingly again.

Sam watched without comprehension.

The cold, lost eyes watched him and the next words turned Sam's blood cold. The boy's voice came up in volume and with a ferocity that Sam had never heard before. "See things on teevee, read them in the books and papers, so many bad things, all hate out there like others hate me." He touched his own small head. "So many things in here not ready yet." The eyelids closed tight and a tiny tear came at each corner. "Not sorry. I will grow older," Randall said, his voice a cruel, unhuman promise.

There was Another who was born in a manger and died on a cross. That One was sheltered for a while and maturity was unforced.

But the new One, the One born for our times, would see man's consuming hate of all others, so consuming that the hate extends even to himself. See it in Alabama and Vietnam and even in the close world around Him. See it on television and read of it in the newspapers and then grow unsheltered in this world of mass and hysterical communication.

Then plan. Then decide.

This one would come to maturity and ripen angry.

Afterword:

As this story appears I will have passed my fortieth birthday, a dangerous time in itself. I suppose that this is a story that I've wanted to do for a very long time, but the writing of it and particularly the finishing of it, the polishing that makes a told-tale into a story, had a depressing effect upon me. I was unable to shake the feeling that in some way I was flaunting God. There was a time when I seriously considered withdrawing the story, but I'm glad now that I didn't. In its way "Lord Randy, My Son" is a deeply religious story, combining that part of me which is best with that part of the world I recognize as worst, but then it's always been a bad but interesting world. I am a lawyer by profession and I will admit that parts of the dream sequence are intensely personal.

If a writer is ever happy with any story, except the "next" one that he's *going* to do, then I'm happy with this one.

EUTOPIA

Introduction to

EUTOPIA:

When it came time to write this introduction for Poul Anderson's story, I found with panic rising that somehow Poul had not been asked for biographical data to be worked into the piece. Each of the other writers had been asked and had sent in his background, as well as the afterword. I had an afterword for "Eutopia," but nothing on Anderson. For a moment I wondered why Poul and no one else had been overlooked. And then it became obvious to me. You would not have to threaten me with thumbscrews or the iron boot to get me to admit I am a sucker for Poul Anderson's work. Nor would it take pressure for me to confess I have read just about everything the man has written in the field of speculative fiction for the past sixteen years. Therefore, such familiarity bred an unconscious feeling in this editor that an introduction could be written with no facts at all. I would rather believe that than the alternative, which is that I'm a forgetful imbecile. One *must* cling to the cornerstones of one's personal religion.

I have my favorite Anderson stories, so do you. I have reread "Un-Man" and "Guardians of Time" and the Hoka stories (written with Gordy Dickson) and "The High Crusade" and "Three Hearts and Three Lions" at least three times each, and several of them half a dozen times. When it became clear that I would have to dredge up biographical facts from *somewhere*, I began scrounging my bookshelves for Anderson volumes: it was slim pickings, I was only able to pull down thirty-two books. The man is *incapable* of writing a dull word!

But aside from the obvious credentials, such as that he has won two Hugos, he is married and has a daughter named Astrid and lives in Orinda, California; he graduated from

the University of Minnesota with a degree in physics; his *Perish by the Sword*, a mystery novel, won the first Macmillan Cock Robin Award; in 1959 he was the Guest of Honor at the World Science Fiction Convention; he sold his first stories in 1947 (both were novelettes, "Tomorrow's Children" and "Logic") to *Astounding*; he was born in Bristol, Pennsylvania; aside from all of these rather mundane facts (and the singular one that *Esquire*, world-renowned for its depth of perceptivity and exhaustive research into anything it prints, cleverly managed—in its January 1966 issue—to label a full-page color photo of Poul with the name A. E. van Vogt, and Van's photo was slug-lined Poul Anderson), there are *secrets* so deeply buried that only personal acquaintance with the man's work can unearth them. So for the first time anywhere, in its own way a dangerous vision, the veil is ripped aside and the *truth* about Poul Anderson can be told:

Because of Anderson's extreme height and his penchant for writing stories about mightily thewed heroes, many of them either reincarnations or descendants of Viking conquerors, the rumor has persisted that Anderson is of Norse ancestry. This is sheer flummery. Poul Anderson (pronounced slightly softer than *pull*) is *actually* one meter tall in stockinged feet (and he wears those *odious* clocked lisle socks), tubby and golden-furred, with a round blunt-muzzled head and small black eyes. Except for his stubby-fingered hands, he resembles nothing so much as a giant teddy bear. It is a tribute to his powers of personal persuasion and the kindness of those around him that he is able to pass himself off as a gangling six-footer with a bushy head of hair and a raconteur's manner of speaking with wildly gesticulating hands the size of picnic hams.

Poul Anderson has never written one word of the stories credited to him. They have *all* been written by F. N. Waldrop, an asthmatic mail clerk in the rural free deliver office of Muscatine, Iowa. Anderson, by dint of threats and personal vilification, has kept Waldrop in thrall for better than twenty years. The fact that Anderson kidnaped Waldrop's

three children in 1946 has not helped the situation much, either.

And as a last laughable untruth, Poul Anderson insists the story which follows is not "dangerous" and could have sold to any magazine. Tell that to *McCall's* or *Boy's Life* after you've read it. And please address all libel suits to F. N. Waldrop, RFD, Muscatine, Iowa.

EUTOPIA

By Poul Anderson

"Gif thit nafn!"

The Danska words barked from the car radio as a jet whine cut across the hum of motor and tires. "Identify yourself!" Iason Philippou cast a look skyward through the bubbletop. He saw a strip of blue between two ragged green walls where pine forest lined the roads. Sunlight struck off the flanks of the killer machine up there. It wailed, came about, and made a circle over him.

Sweat started cold from his armpits and ran down his ribs. *I must not panic,* he thought in a corner of his brain. *May the God help me now.* But it was his training he invoked. Psychosomatics: control the symptoms, keep the breath steady, command the pulse to slow, and the fear of death becomes something you can handle. He was young, and thus had much to lose. But the philosophers of Eutopia schooled well the children given into their care. You will be a man, they had told him, and the pride of humanity is that we are not bound by instinct and reflex; we are free because we can master ourselves.

He couldn't pass as an ordinary citizen (no, they said mootman here) of Norland. If nothing else, his Hellenic accent was too strong. But he might fool yonder pilot, for just a few minutes, into believing he was from some other domain of this history. He roughened his tone, as a partial disguise, and assumed the expected arrogance.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Runolf Einarson, captain of the hird of Ottar Thorkelsson, the Lawman of Norland. I pursue one who has brought feud on his own head. Give me your name."

Runolf, Iason thought. *Why, yes, I remember you well, dark and erect with the Tyrker side of your heritage, but you have blue eyes that came long ago from Thule.* In that detached part of him which stood aside watching: *No, here I scramble my histories. I would call the autochthons Erythrai, and you call the country of your European ancestors Danarik.*

"I hight Xipec, a trader from Meyaco," he said. He did not slow down. The norder was not many stadia away, so furiously had he driven through the night since he escaped from the Lawman's castle. He had small hope of getting that far, but each turn of the wheels brought him nearer. The forest was blurred with his speed.

"If so be, of course I am sorry to halt you," Runolf's voice crackled. "Call the Lawman and he will send swift gild for the overtreading of your rights. Yet I must have you stop and leave your car, so I may turn the farseer on your face."

"Why?" Another second or two gained.

"There was a visitor from Homeland"—Europe—"who came to Ernvik. Ottar Thorkelsson guested him freely. In return, he did a thing that only his death can make clean again. Rather than meet Ottar on the Valfield, he stole a car, the same make as yours, and fled."

"Would it not serve to call him a nithing before the folk?" *I have learned this much of their barbaric customs, anyhow!*

"Now that is a strange thing for a Meyacan to say. Stop at once and get out, or I open fire."

Iason realized his teeth were clenched till they hurt. How in Hades could a man remember the hundreds of little regions, each with its own ways, into which the continent lay divided? Westfall was a more fantastic jumble than all Earth in that history where they called the place America.

Well, he thought, *now we discover what the odds are of my hearing it named Eutopia again.*

"Very well," he said. "You leave me no choice. But I shall indeed want compensation for this insult."

He braked as slowly as he dared. The road was a hard black ribbon before him, slashed through an immensity of trees. He didn't know if these woods had ever been logged. Perhaps so, when white men first sailed through the Pentalimne (calling them the Five Seas) to found Ernvik where Duluth stood in America and Lykopolis in Eutopia. In those days Norland had spread mightily across the lake country. But then came wars with Dakotas and Magyars, to set a limit; and the development of trade—more recently of synthetics—enabled the people to use their hinterland for the hunting they so savagely loved. Three hundred years could re-establish a climax forest.

Sharply before him stood the vision of this area as he had known it at home: ordered groves and gardens, villages planned for beauty as well as use, lithe brown bodies on the athletic fields, music under moonlight . . . Even America the dreadful was more human than a wilderness.

They were gone, lost in the multiple dimensions of space-time, he was alone and death walked the sky. *And no self-pity, you idiot! Spend energy for survival.*

The car stopped, hard by the road edge. Iason gathered his thews, opened the door, and sprang.

Perhaps the radio behind him uttered a curse. The jet slewed around and stooped like a hawk. Bullets sleeted at his heels.

Then he was in among the trees. They roofed him with sun-speckled shadow. Their trunks stood in massive masculine strength, their branches breathed fragrance a woman might envy. Fallen needles softened his foot-thud, a thrush warbled, a light wind cooled his cheeks. He threw himself beneath the shelter of one bole and lay in a gasping and heartbeat which all but drowned the sinister whistle above.

Presently it went away. Runolf must have called back to

his lord. Ottar would fly horses and hounds to this place, the only way of pursuit. But Iason had a few hours' grace.

After that He rallied his training, sat up and thought. If Socrates, feeling the hemlock's chill, could speak wisdom to the young men of Athens, Iason Philippou could assess his own chances. For he wasn't dead yet.

He numbered his assets. A pistol of the local slug-throwing type; a compass; a pocketful of gold and silver coins; a cloak that might double as a blanket, above the tunic-trousers-boots costume of central Westfall. And himself, the ultimate instrument. His body was tall and broad—together with fair hair and short nose, an inheritance from Gallic ancestry—and had been trained by men who won wreaths at the Olympeion. His mind, his entire nervous system, counted for still more. The pedagogues of Eutopia had made logic, semantic consciousness, perspective as natural to him as breathing; his memory was under such control that he had no need for a map; despite one calamitous mistake, he knew he was trained to deal with the most outlandish manifestations of the human spirit.

And, yes, before all else, he had reason to live. It went beyond any blind wish to continue an identity; that was only something the DNA molecule had elaborated in order to make more DNA molecules. He had his beloved to return to. He had his country: Eutopia, the Good Land, which his people had founded two thousand years ago on a new continent, leaving behind the hatreds and horrors of Europe, taking along the work of Aristotle, and writing at last in their Syntagma, "The national purpose is the attainment of universal sanity."

Iason Philippou was bound home.

He rose and started walking south.

That was on Tetrade, which his hunters called Onsdag Some thirty-six hours later, he knew he was not in Pentade but near sunset of Thorsdag. For he lurched through the wood, mouth filled with mummy dust, belly a cavern of emptiness, knees shaking beneath him, flies a thundercloud

about the sweat dried on his skin, and heard the distant belling of hounds.

A horn responded, long brazen snarl though the leaf arches. They had gotten his scent, he could not outrun horsemen and he would not see the stars again.

One hand dropped to his gun. *I'll take a couple of them with me....No.* He was still a Hellene, who did not kill uselessly, not even barbarians who meant to slay him because he had broken a taboo of theirs. *I will stand under an open sky, take their bullets, and go down into darkness remembering Eutopia and all my friends and Niki whom I love.*

Realization came, dimly, that he had left the pine forest and was in a second growth of beeches. Light gilded their leaves and caressed the slim white trunks. And what was that growl up ahead?

He stopped. A portal might remain. He had driven himself near collapse; but the organism has a reserve which the fully integrated man may call upon. From consciousness he abolished the sound of dogs, every ache and exhaustion. He drew breath after breath of air, noting its calm and purity, visualizing the oxygen atoms that poured through his starved tissues. He made the heartbeat quit racketing, go over to a deep slow pulse; he tensed and relaxed muscles until each functioned smoothly again; pain ceased to feed on itself and died away; despair gave place to calm and calculation. He trod forth.

Plowlands rolled southward before him, their young grain vivid in the light that slanted gold from the west. Not far off stood a cluster of farm buildings, long, low, and peak-roofed. Chimney smoke stained heaven. But his eyes went first to the man closer by. The fellow was cultivating with a tractor. Though the dielectric motor had been invented in this world, its use had not yet spread this far north, and gasoline fumes caught at Iason's nostrils. He had thought that stench one of the worst abominations in America -that hogpen they called Los Angeles!—but now it came to him clean and strong, for it was his hope.

The driver saw him, halted, and unshipped a rifle. Iason approached with palms held forward in a token of peace. The driver relaxed. He was a typical Magyar: burly, high in the cheekbones, his beard braided, his tunic colorfully embroidered. *So I did cross the border!* Iason exulted. *I'm out of Norland and into the Voivodate of Dakoty.*

Before they sent him here, the anthropologists of the Parachronic Research Institute had of course given him an electrochemical inculcation in the principal languages of Westfall. (Pity they hadn't been more thorough about teaching him the mores. But then, he had been hastily recruited for the Norland post after Megasthenes' accidental death; and it was assumed that his experience in America gave him special qualifications for this history, which was also non-Alexandrine; and, to be sure, the whole object of missions like his was to learn just how societies on the different Earths did vary.) He formed the Ural-Altaic words with ease:

"Greeting to you. I come as a supplicant."

The farmer sat quiet, tense, looking down on him and listening to the dogs far off in the forest. His rifle stayed ready. "Are you an outlaw?" he asked.

"Not in this realm, freeman." (Still another name and concept for "citizen"!) "I was a peaceful trader from Homeland, visiting Lawman Ottar Thorkelsson in Ernvik. His anger fell upon me, so great that he broke sacred hospitality and sought the life of me, his guest. Now his hunters are on my trail. You hear them yonder."

"Norlanders? But this is Dakoty."

Iason nodded. He let his teeth show, in the grime and stubble of his face. "Right. They've entered your country without so much as a by-your-leave. If you stand idle, they'll ride onto your freehold and slay me, who asks your help."

The farmer hefted his gun. "How do I know you speak truth?"

"Take me to the Voivode," Iason said. "Thus you keep both the law and your honor." Very carefully, he unholstered his pistol and offered it butt foremost. "I am forever your debtor."

Doubt, fear and anger pursued each other across the face of the man on the tractor. He did not take the weapon. Iason waited. *If I've read him correctly, I've gained some hours of life. Perhaps more. That will depend on the Voivode. My whole chance lies in using their own barbarism—their division into petty states, their crazy idea of honor, their fetish of property and privacy—to harness them.*

If I fail, then I shall die like a civilized man. That they cannot take away from me.

"The hounds have winded you. They'll be here before we can escape," said the Magyar uneasily.

Relief made Iason dizzy. He fought down the reaction and said: "We can take care of them for a time. Let me have some gasoline."

"Ah . . . thus!" The other man chuckled and jumped to earth. "Good thinking, stranger. And thanks, by the way. Life has been dull hereabouts for too many years."

He had a spare can of fuel on his machine. They lugged it back along Iason's trail for a considerable distance, dousing soil and trees. If that didn't throw the pack off, nothing would.

"Now, hurry!" The Magyar led the way at a trot.

His farmstead was built around an open courtyard. Sweet scents of hay and livestock came from the barns. Several children ran forth to gape. The wife shooed them back inside, took her husband's rifle, and mounted guard at the door with small change of expression.

Their house was solid, roomy, aesthetically pleasing if you could accept the unrestrained tapestries and painted pillars. Above the fireplace was a niche for a family altar. Though most people in Westfall had left myth long behind them, these peasants still seemed to adore the Triple God Odin-Attila-Manitou. But the man went to a sophisticated radiophone. "I don't have an aircraft myself," he said, "but I can get one."

Iason sat down to wait. A girl neared him shyly with a beaker of beer and a slab of cheese on course dark bread. "Be you guest-holy," she said.

"May my blood be yours," Iason answered by rote. He managed to take the refreshment not quite like a wolf.

The farmer came back. "A few more minutes," he said. "I am Arpad, son of Kalman."

"Iason Philippou." It seemed wrong to give a false name. The hand he clasped was hard and warm.

"What made you fall afoul of old Ottar?" Arpad inquired.

"I was lured," Iason said bitterly. "Seeing how free the unwed women were—"

"Ah, indeed. They're a lickerish lot, those Danskar. Nigh as shameless as Tyrkers." Arpad got pipe and tobacco pouch off a shelf. "Smoke?"

"No, thank you." *We don't degrade ourselves with drugs in Eutopia.*

The hounds drew close. Their chant broke into confused yelps. Horns shrilled. Arpad stuffed his pipe as coolly as if this were a show. "How they must be swearing!" he grinned. "I'll give the Danskar credit for being poets, also in their oaths. And brave men, to be sure. I was up that way ten years back, when Voivode Bela sent people to help them after the floods they'd suffered. I saw them laugh as they fought the wild water. And then, their sort gave us a hard time in the old wars."

"Do you think there will ever be wars again?" Iason asked. Mostly he wanted to avoid speaking further of his troubles. He wasn't sure how his host might react.

"Not in Westfall. Too much work to do. If young blood isn't cooled enough by a duel now and then, why, there're wars to hire out for, among the barbarian overseas. Or else the planets. My oldest boy champs to go there."

Iason recalled that several realms further south were pooling their resources for astronautical work. Being approximately at the technological level of the American history, and not required to maintain huge military or social programs, they had put a base on the moon and sent expeditions to Ares. In time, he supposed they would do what the Hellenes had done a thousand years ago, and make Aphrodite

into a new Earth. But would they have a true civilization—be rational men in a rationally planned society—by then? Wearily, he doubted it.

A roar outside brought Arpad to his feet. "There's your wagon," he said. "Best you go. Red Horse will fly you to Varady."

"The Danskar will surely come here soon," Iason worried.

"Let them," Arpad shrugged. "I'll alert the neighborhood, and they're not so stupid that they won't know I have. We'll hold a slanging match, and then I'll order them off my land. Farewell, guest."

"I . . . I wish I could repay your kindness."

"Bah! Was fun. Also a chance to be a man before my sons."

Iason went out. The aircraft was a helicopter—they hadn't discovered gravitics here piloted by a taciturn young autochthon. He explained that he was a stockbreeder, and that he was conveying the stranger less as a favor to Arpad than as an answer to the Norlander impudence of entering Dakoty unbidden. Iason was just as happy to be free of conversation.

The machine whirred aloft. As it drove south he saw clustered hamlets, the occasional hall of some magnate, otherwise only rich undulant plains. They kept the population within bounds in Westfall as in Eutopia. But not because they knew that men need space and clean air, Iason thought. No, they acted from greed on behalf of the reified family. A father did not wish to divide his possessions among many children.

The sun went down and a nearly full moon climbed huge and pumpkin-colored over the eastern rim of the world. Iason sat back, feeling the engine's throb in his bones, almost savoring his fatigue, and watched. No sign of the lunar base was visible. He must return home before he could see the moon glitter with cities.

And home was more than infinitely remote. He could travel to the farthest of those stars which had begun twink-

ling forth against purple dusk—were it possible to exceed the speed of light—and not find Eutopia. It lay sundered from him by dimensions and destiny. Nothing but the warpfields of a parachronion might take him across the time lines to his own.

He wondered about the why. That was an empty speculation, but his tired brain found relief in childishness. Why had the God willed that time branch and rebranch, enormous, shadowy, bearing universes like the Yggdrasil of Danskar legend? Was it so that man could realize every potentiality there was in him?

Surely not. So many of them were utter horror.

Suppose Alexander the Conqueror had not recovered from the fever that smote him in Babylon. Suppose, instead of being chastened thereby, so that he spent the rest of a long life making firm the foundation of his empire—suppose he had died?

Well, it *did* happen, and probably in more histories than not. There the empire went down in mad-dog wars of succession. Hellas and the Orient broke apart. Nascent science withered away into metaphysics, eventually outright mysticism. A convulsed Mediterranean world was swept up piecemeal by the Romans: cold, cruel, uncreative, claiming to be the heirs of Hellas even as they destroyed Corinth. A heretical Jewish prophet founded a mystery cult which took root everywhere, for men despaired of this life. And that cult knew not the name of tolerance. Its priests denied all but one of the manifold ways in which the God is seen; they cut down the holy grove, took from the house its humble idols, and martyred the last men whose souls were free.

Oh yes, Iason thought, *in time they lost their grip. Science could be born, almost two millennia later than ours. But the poison remained: the idea that men must conform not only in behavior but in belief. Now, in America, they call it totalitarianism. And because of it, the nuclear rockets have had their nightmare hatching.*

I hate that history, its filth, its waste, its ugliness, its restriction, its hypocrisy, its insanity. I will never have a

harder task than when I pretended to be an American that I might see from within how they thought they were ordering their lives. But tonight . . . I pity you, poor raped world, I do not know whether to wish you soon dead, as you likeliest will be, or hope that one day your descendants can struggle to what we achieved an age ago.

They were luckier here. I must admit that. Christendom fell before the onslaught of Arab, Viking and Magyar. Afterward the Islamic Empire killed itself in civil wars and the barbarians of Europe could go their own way. When they crossed the Atlantic, a thousand years back, they had not the power to commit genocide on the natives; they must come to terms. They had not the industry, then, to gut the hemisphere; perforce they grew into the land slowly, taking it as a man takes his bride.

But those vast dark forests, mournful plains, unpeopled deserts and mountains where the wild goats run . . . those entered their souls. They will always, inwardly, be savages.

He sighed, settled down, and made himself sleep. Niki haunted his dreams.

Where a waterfall marked the head of navigation on that great river known variously as the Zeus, Mississippi and Longflood, a basically agricultural people who had not developed air transport as far as in Eutopia were sure to build a city. Trade and military power brought with them government, art, science and education. Varady housed a hundred thousand or so—they didn't take censuses in Westfall whose inward-turning homes surrounded the castle towers of the Voivode. Waking, Iason walked out on his balcony and heard the traffic rumble. Beyond roofs lay the defensive outworks. He wondered if a peace founded on the balance of power between statelets could endure.

But the morning was too cool and bright for such musings. He was here, safe, cleansed and rested. There had been little talk when he arrived. Seeing the condition of the fugitive who sought him, Bela Zsolt's son had given him dinner and sent him to bed.

Soon we'll confer, Iason understood, *and I'll have to be most careful if I'm to live.* But the health which had been restored to him glowed so strong that he felt no need to suppress worry.

A bell chimed within. He re-entered the room, which was spacious and airy however overornamented. Recalling that custom disapproved of nudity, he threw on a robe, not without wincing at its zigzag pattern. "Be welcome," he called in Magyar.

The door opened and a young woman wheeled in his breakfast. "Good luck to you, guest," she said with an accent; she was a Tyrker, and even wore the beaded and fringed dress of her people. "Did you sleep well?"

"Like Coyote after a prank," he laughed.

She smiled back, pleased at his reference, and set a table. She joined him too. Guests did not eat alone. He found venison a rather strong dish this early in the day, but the coffee was delicious and the girl chattered charmingly. She was employed as a maid, she told him, and saving her money for a marriage portion when she returned to Cherokee land.

"Will the Voivode see me?" Iason asked after they had finished.

"He awaits your pleasure." Her lashes fluttered. "But we have no haste." She began to untie her belt.

Hospitality so lavish must be the result of customal superimposition, the easygoing Danskar and still freer Tyrker mores influencing the austere Magyars. Iason felt almost as if he were now home, in a world where individuals found delight in each other as they saw fit. He was tempted, too—that broad smooth brow reminded him of Niki. But no. He had little time. Unless he established his position unbreakably firm before Ottar thought to call Bela, he was trapped.

He leaned across the table and patted one small hand. "I thank you, lovely," he said, "but I am under vow."

She took the answer as naturally as she had posed the question. This world, which had the means to unify, chose as if deliberately to remain in shards of separate culture. Some-

thing of his alienation came back to him as he watched her sway out the door. For he had only glimpsed a small Liberty. Life in Westfall remained a labyrinth of tradition, manner, law and taboo.

Which had well-nigh cost him his life, he reflected; and might yet. Best hurry!

He tumbled into the clothes laid out for him and made his way down long stone halls. Another servant directed him to the Voivode's seat. Several people waited outside to have complaints heard or disputes adjudicated. But when he announced himself, Iason was passed through immediately.

The room beyond was the most ancient part of the building. Age-cracked timber columns, grotesquely carved with gods and heroes, upheld a low roof. A fire pit in the floor curled smoke toward a hole; enough stayed behind for Iason's eyes to sting. They could easily have given their chief magistrate a modern office, he thought—but no, because his ancestors had judged in this kennel, so must he.

Light filtering through slit windows touched the craggy features of Bela and lost itself in shadow. The Voivode was thickset and gray-haired; his features bespoke a considerable admixture of Tyrker chromosomes. He sat a wooden throne, his body wrapped in a blanket, horns and feathers on his head. His left hand bore a horse-tailed staff and a drawn saber was laid across his lap.

"Greeting, Iason Philippou," he said gravely. He gestured at a stool. "Be seated."

"I thank my lord." The Eutopian remembered how his own people had outgrown titles.

"Are you prepared to speak truth?"

"Yes."

"Good." Abruptly the figure relaxed, crossed legs and extracted a cigar from beneath the blanket. "Smoke? No? Well, I will." A smile meshed the leathery face in wrinkles. "You being a foreigner, I needn't keep up this damned ceremony."

Iason tried to reply in kind. "That's a relief. We haven't much in the Peloponnesian Republic."

"Your home country, eh? I hear things aren't going so well there."

"No. Homeland grows old. We look to Westfall for our tomorrows."

"You said last night that you came to Norland as a trader."

"To negotiate a commercial agreement." Iason was staying as near his cover story as possible. You couldn't tell different histories that the Hellenes had invented the parachronion. Besides changing the very conditions that were being studied, it would be too cruel to let men know that other men lived in perfection. "My country is interested in buying lumber and furs."

"Hm. So Ottar invited you to stay with him. I can grasp why. We don't see many Homelanders. But one day he was after your blood. What happened?"

Iason might have claimed privacy, but that wouldn't have sat well. And an outright lie was dangerous; before his throne, one was automatically under oath. "To a degree, no doubt, the fault was mine," he said. "One of his family, almost grown, was attracted to me and—I had been long away from my wife, and everyone had told me the Danskar hold with freedom before marriage, and—well, I meant no harm. I merely encouraged—But Ottar found out, and challenged me."

"Why did you not meet him?"

No use to say that a civilized man did not engage in violence when any alternative existed. "Consider, my lord," Iason said. "If I lost, I'd be dead. If I won, that would be the end of my company's project. The Ottarssons would never have taken weregild, would they? No, at the bare least they'd ban us all from their land. And Peloponnesus needs that timber. I thought I'd do best to escape. Later my associates would disown me before Norland."

"M-m . . . strange reasoning. But you're loyal, anyhow. What do you ask of me?"

"Only safe conduct to—Steinvik." Iason almost said "Neathenai." He checked his eagerness. "We have a factor there, and a ship."

Bela streamed smoke from his mouth and scowled at the glowing cigar end. "I'd like to know why Ottar grew wrathful. Doesn't sound like him. Though I suppose, when a man's daughter is involved, he doesn't feel so lenient." He hunched forward. "For me," he said harshly, "the important thing is that armed Norlanders crossed my border without asking."

"A grievous violation of your rights, true."

Bela uttered a horseman's obscenity. "You don't understand, you. Borders aren't sacred because Attila wills it, whatever the shamans prate. They're sacred because that's the only way to keep the peace. If I don't openly resent this crossing, and punish Ottar for it, some hothead might well someday be tempted; and now everyone has nuclear weapons."

"I don't want war on my account!" Iason exclaimed, appalled. "Send me back to him first!"

"Oh no, no such nonsense. Ottar's punishment shall be that I deny him his revenge, regardless of the rights and wrongs of your case. He'll swallow that."

Bela rose. He put his cigar in an ashtray, lifted the saber, and all at once he was transfigured. A heathen god might have spoken: "Henceforward, Iason Philippou, you are peace-holy in Dakoty. While you remain beneath our shield, ill done you is ill done me, my house and my people. So help me the Three!"

Self-command broke down. Iason went on his knees and gasped his thanks.

"Enough," Bela grunted. "Let's arrange for your transportation as fast as may be. I'll send you by air, with a military squadron. But of course, I'll need permission from the realms you'll cross. That will take time. Go back, relax, I'll have you called when everything's ready."

Iason left, still shivering.

He spent a pleasant couple of hours adrift in the castle and its courtyards. The young men of Bela's retinue were eager to show off before a Homelander. He had to grant the

picturesqueness of their riding, wrestling, shooting and riddling contests; something stirred in him as he listened to tales of faring over the plains and into the forests and by river to Umborg's fabled metropolis; the chant of a bard awakened glories which went deeper than the history told, down to the instincts of man the killer ape.

But these are precisely the bright temptations that we have turned our backs on in Eutopia. For we deny that we are apes. We are men who can reason. In that lies our manhood.

I am going home. I am going home. I am going home.

A servant tapped his arm. "The Voivode wants you." It was a frightened voice.

Iason hastened back. What had gone wrong? He was not taken to the room of the high seat. Instead, Bela awaited him on a parapet. Two men-at-arms stood at attention behind, faces blank under the plumed helmets.

The day and the breeze were mocked by Bela's look. He spat on Iason's feet. "Ottar has called me," he said.

"I—Did he say—"

"And I thought you were only trying to bed a girl. Not seeking to destroy the house that befriended you!"

"My lord—"

"Have no fears. You sucked my oath out of me. Now I must spend years trying to make amends to Ottar for cheating him."

"But—" *Calm! Calm! You might have expected this.*

"You will not ride in a warcraft. You'll have your escort, yes. But the machine that carries you must be burned afterward. Now go wait by the stables, next to the dung heap, till we're ready."

"I meant no harm," Iason protested. "I did not know."

"Take him away before I kill him," Bela ordered.

Steinvik was old. These narrow cobbled streets, these gaunt houses, had seen dragon ships. But the same wind blew off the Atlantic, salt and fresh, to drive from Iason the last hurt of that sullenness which had ridden here with him. He pushed whistling through the crowds.

A man of Westfall, or America, would have slunk back. Had he not failed? Must he not be replaced by someone whose cover story bore no hint of Hellas? But they saw with clear eyes in Eutopia. His failure was due to an honest mistake: a mistake he would not have made had they taught him more carefully before sending him out. One learns by error.

The memory of people in Ernvik and Varady—gusty, generous people whose friendship he would have liked to keep—had nagged him awhile. But he put that aside too. There were other worlds, an endlessness of them.

A signboard creaked in the wind. The Brotherhood of Hunyadi and Ivar, Shipfolk. Good camouflage, that, in a town where every second enterprise was bent seaward. He ran to the second floor. The stairs clattered under his boots.

He spread his palm before a chart on the wall. A hidden scanner identified his fingerpatterns and a hidden door opened. The room beyond was wainscoted in local fashion. But its clean proportions spoke of home; and a Nike statuette spread wings on a shelf.

Nike ... Niki ... I'm coming back to you! The heart leaped in him.

Daimonax Aristides looked up from his desk. Iason sometimes wondered if anything would rock the calm of that man "Rejoice!" the deep voice boomed. "What brings you here?"

"Bad news, I'm afraid."

"So? Your attitude suggests that the matter isn't catastrophic." Daimonax's frame left his chair, went to the wine cabinet, filled a pair of chaste and beautiful goblets, and relaxed on a couch. "Come, tell me."

Iason joined him. "Unknowingly," he said, "I violated what appears to be a prime taboo. I was lucky to get away alive."

"Eh." Daimonax stroked his iron-gray beard. "Not the first such turn, or the last. We fumble our way toward knowledge, but reality will always surprise us . . Well, congratulations on your whole skin. I'd have hated to mourn you."

Solemnly, they poured a libation before they drank. The rational man recognizes his own need for ceremony; and why not draw it from otherwise outgrown myth? Besides, the floor was stainproof.

"Do you feel ready to report?" Daimonax asked.

"Yes, I ordered the data in my head on the way here."

Daimonax switched on a recorder, spoke a few cataloguing words and said, "Proceed."

Iason flattered himself that his statement was well arranged: clear, frank and full. But as he spoke, against his will experience came back to him, not in the brain but in the guts. He saw waves sparkle on that greatest of the Pentalimne: he walked the halls of Ernvik castle with eager and wondering young Leif; he faced an Ottar become beast; he stole from the keep and overpowered a guard and by-passed the controls of a car with shaking fingers; he fled down an empty road and stumbled through an empty forest; Bela spat and his triumph was suddenly ashen. At the end, he could not refrain:

"Why wasn't I informed? I'd have taken care But they said this was a free and healthy folk, before marriage anyway. How could I know?"

"An oversight," Daimonax agreed. "But we haven't been in this business so long that we don't still tend to take too much for granted."

"Why are we here? What have we to learn from these barbarians? With infinity to explore, why are we wasting ourselves on the second most ghastly world we've found?"

Daimonax turned off the recorder. For a time there was silence between the men. Wheels trundled outside, laughter and a snatch of song drifted through the window, the ocean blazed under a low sun.

"You do not know?" Daimonax asked at last, softly.

"Well . . scientific interest, of course—" Iason swallowed. "I'm sorry. The Institute works for sound reasons. In the American history we're observing ways that man can go wrong. I suppose here also."

Daimonax shook his head. "No."

"What?"

"We are learning something far too precious to give up," Daimonax said. "The lesson is humbling, but our smug Eutopia will be the better for some humility. You weren't aware of it, because to date we haven't sufficient hard facts to publish any conclusions. And then, you are new in the profession, and your first assignment was elsewhere. But you see, we have excellent reason to believe that Westfall is also the Good Land."

"Impossible." Iason whispered.

Daimonax smiled and took a sip of wine. "Think," he said. "What does man require? First, the biological necessities, food, shelter, medicine, sex, a healthful and reasonably safe environment in which to raise his children. Second, the special human need to strive, learn, create. Well, don't they have these things here?"

"One could say the same for any Stone Age tribe. You can't equate contentment with happiness."

"Of course not. And if anything, is not ordered, unified, planned Eutopia the country of the cows? We have ended every conflict, to the very conflict of man with his own soul; we have mastered the planets; the stars are too distant; were the God not so good as to make possible the parachronion, what would be left for us?"

"Do you mean –" Iason groped after words. He reminded himself that it was not sane to take umbrage at any mere statement, however outrageous. "Without fighting, clannishness, superstition, ritual and taboo ... man has nothing?"

"More or less that. Society must have structure and meaning. But nature does not dictate what structure or what meaning. Our rationalism is a non-rational choice. Our leashing of the purely animal within us is simply another taboo. We may love as we please, but not hate as we please. So are we more free than men in Westfall?"

"But surely some cultures are better than others!"

"I do not deny that," Daimonax said; "I only point out that each has its price. For what we enjoy at home, we pay

dearly. We do not allow ourselves a single unthinking, merely felt impulse. By excluding danger and hardship, by eliminating distinctions between men, we leave no hopes of victory. Worst, perhaps, is this: that we have become pure individuals. We belong to no one. Our sole obligation is negative, not to compel any other individual. The state—an engineered organization, a faceless undemanding mechanism takes care of each need and each hurt. Where is loyalty unto death? Where is the intimacy of an entire shared lifetime? We play at ceremonies, but because we know they are arbitrary gestures, what is their value? Because we have made our world one, where are color and contrast, where is pride in being peculiarly ourselves?

"Now these Westfall people, with all their faults, do know who they are, what they are, what they belong to and what belongs to them. Tradition is not buried in books but is part of life; and so their dead remain with them in loving memory. Their problems are real; hence their successes are real. They believe in their rites. The family, the kingdom, the race is something to live and die for. They use their brains less, perhaps—though even that I am not certain of—but they use nerves, glands, muscles more. So they know an aspect of being human which our careful world has denied itself.

"If they have kept this while creating science and machine technology, should we not try to learn from them?"

Iason had no answer.

Eventually Daimonax said he might as well return to Eutopia. After a vacation, he could be reassigned to some history he might find more congenial. They parted in friendly wise.

The parachronion hummed. Energies pulsed between the universes. The gate opened and Iason stepped through.

He entered a glazed colonnade. White Neathenai swept in grace and serenity down to the water. The man who received him was a philosopher. Decent tunic and sandals hung ready to be donned. From somewhere resounded a lyre.

Joy trembled in Iason. Leif Ottarsson fell out of memory.

He had only been tempted in his loneliness by a chance resemblance to his beloved. Now he was home. And Niki waited for him, Nikias Demostheneou, most beautiful and enchanting of boys.

Afterword:

Readers ought to know that writers are not responsible for the opinions and behavior of their characters. But many people don't. In consequence, I, for instance, have been called a fascist to my face. Doubtless the present story will get me accused of worse. And I only wanted to spin a yarn!

Well, perhaps a bit more. That can't be helped. Everybody views the world from his particular philosophical platform. Hence any writer who tries to report what he sees is, inevitably, propagandizing. But as a rule the propaganda lies below the surface. This is twice true of science fiction, which begins by transmuting reality to frank unreality.

So what have I been advocating here? Not any particular form of society. On the contrary, humankind seems to me so splendidly and ironically variable that there can be no perfect social order. I do suspect that few people are biologically adapted to civilization; consider its repeated collapses. This idea could be wrong, of course. Even if true, it may just be another factor which our planning should take into account. But the mutability of man is hardly open to question.

Thus each arrangement he makes will have its flaws, which in the end bring it to ruin; but each will also have its virtues. I myself don't think here-and-now is such a bad place to live. But others might. In fact, others do. At the same time, we cannot deny that *some* ways of life are, on balance, evil. The worst and most dangerous are those which cannot tolerate anything different from themselves.

So in an age of conflict we need a clear understanding of our own values—and the enemy's. Likewise we have to see with equal clarity the drawbacks of both cultures. This is less

a moral than a strategic imperative. Only on such a basis can we know what we ought to do and what is possible for us to do.

For we are not caught in a meaningless nightmare. We are inhabiting a real world where events have understandable causes and causes have effects. We were never given any sacred mission, and it would be fatal to believe otherwise. We do, though, have the right of self-preservation. Let us know what it is we want to preserve. Then common sense and old-fashioned guts will probably get us through.

This is rather a heavy sermon to load on a story which was, after all, meant as entertainment. The point was made far better by Robinson Jeffers:

"Long live freedom and damn the ideologies."

A Pair of Bunch

INCIDENT IN MODERAN AND THE ESCAPING

Introduction to

A PAIR OF BUNCH:

Only one writer has two stories in this anthology, and surprise! it ain't me. It is David R. Bunch, a writer whose work I admire vastly. And a writer who has, oddly enough, barely received the acclaim due him. The first time I read a Bunch story was in a handsome fan magazine called *Inside*, published by Ron Smith. He had come across Bunch (or vice versa) and had been intrigued by the man's unusual style, his sense of poetry, the almost Dada-like visions he was able to convey in the medium of fantasy and science fiction. Bunch was published regularly in *Inside*. His work drew mixed reactions. Some very perceptive critics (such as John Ciardi) commented knowledgeably. The *schmuck* fans scratched their heads and wondered why space was wasted on Bunch when they could be reading more and better analyses of the inertialess drive as utilized in the stories of Ed Earl Repp, or somedamnsuch. Half a dozen years ago the attractive and intelligent ex-editor of *Amazing Stories*, Cele Goldsmith Lalli, began publishing stories by Bunch. Once again the furor and the mixed reaction. But Bunch had found a home. With considerable courage both Bunch and Cele began releasing stories about Moderan, a world of robots. They were frankly cautionary tales, the finger of warning jammed directly in the eye or up the nose of the reader. I have waited ten years to be able to publish Bunch myself. Therefore, *two* by Bunch, a tiny bunch of Bunch, maybe a nosegay.

Bunch is a native of Missouri. He has a wide educational background; class valedictorian in high school, he was awarded a scholarship to Central Missouri State College, where he majored in English with a double minor in physics and social science, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree; he received a Master of Arts at Washington Univer-

sity, where he concentrated on English and American literature. At one point he had done the course work for the Ph.D. with admission to candidacy, but just before the last grind for the final grind he fled from the dissertation writing to the Writer's Workshop at the State University of Iowa. There he found surcease for a time, and finally left even that hallowed hall of ivy to write his own way, on his own time. He has never returned.

The light has seemingly harmed him little. He has been published in over forty magazines, represented by poetry and short stories of a wide variety. Most of his work has seen publication in the "little" magazines or the science fiction magazines. Of the former he has been seen in *San Francisco Review, Southwest Review, New Mexico Quarterly, Chelsea, Perspective, Genesis West, The Smith, Shenandoah, New Frontiers, Simbolica, The Fiddlehead, Epos, The Galley Sail Review, Forum* and a host of others. He has been published in almost every s-f journal extant, and has outlived a score of others. He has been honored three times by Judith Merril in her *Year's Best SF* anthologies. A collection of his short stories has been accepted for hardcover publication this year. His verse has appeared in as many more magazines as those noted above, and a collection of poetry is scheduled for book publication.

Bunch is possibly the most dangerous visionary of all those represented here. He has been that way all through his speculative writing career, not merely stretched-out for this special occasion as are some of the men herein. He writes of the enigma, the conundrum, the query, the fable of futurity. He speaks in riddles. It is to the reader's advantage to try unraveling them.

INCIDENT IN MODERAN

by David R. Bunch

In Moderan we are not often between wars, but this was a truce time. A couple of Strongholds in the north had malfunctioned—some breakdown in their ammo-transport belts, I think—and we had all voted to hold up the war a day or so to give them a chance to get back in the blasting. Don't get me wrong this was no lily-white flower-heart fair-play kind of thing or love-thy-neighbor-Stronghold sort of hypocrisy, like might have been in the Old Days. This was a hard-neck common-sense compromise with reality. The bigger and better the war, the bigger and better the chance to hate voluminously and win honors. It was as simple as that.

But at any rate, it was between wars that I was doing some odd-job things just outside the eleventh, outermost Wall of my Stronghold. To be right truthful, I was mostly just sitting out there in my hip-snuggie chair, enjoying the bleary summer sun through the red-brown vapor shield of July and telling my head weapons man what to do. He was, so it chanced, polishing an honors plaque that proclaimed on Wall 11 how our fort, Stronghold 10, was FIRST IN WAR, FIRST IN HATE, AND FIRST IN THE FEARS OF THE ENEMY.

Things were getting tedious. What I mean is, it was getting dull, this sitting around between wars, directing the polishing of plaques and dozing in the filtered summer sun. Out of sheer boredom, and for the amusement of it all, I suppose, I was just about ready to get up and start beating my weapons man with my new-metal swagger stick loaded with lead. Not that he wasn't doing an excellent job, you understand, but just to have something to do. I was saved this rather stupid and perhaps pointless, though not altogether unpleasant, expedient by a movement on the ninth hill to my left. Quickly I adjusted my wide-range Moderan vision

to pinpoint look, threw my little pocko-scope viewer up to my eyes and caught a shape.

When it got there, it was a shape, all right! I immediately saw it was one of those pieces of movement—man? animal? walking vegetable?—well, what are we going to say for most of these mutant forms that roam the homeless plastic in Moderan? When he stood before me, I felt disturbed. Strangely I felt somehow guilty, and ashamed, that he was so bent and twisted and mushy-looking with flesh. Oh, why can't they all be hard and shining with metal, and clean, like we Stronghold masters are, with a very minimum of flesh-strip holding them in shape? It makes for such a well-ordered and hate-happy life, the way we masters are in Moderan, so shiny and steellike in our glory, with our flesh-strips few and played down and new-metal alloy the bulk of our bodily splendor. But I suppose there must always be lower forms, insects for us to stride on. . . . I decided to try speech, since I couldn't just sit there with him looking at me. "We're between wars here," I said conversationally. "Two of the mighty Strongholds of the north broke down, so we decided to hold up."

He didn't say anything. He was looking at the honors plaque on Wall 11 and at the weapons man polishing the proud words. "It's just a kind of fill-in in-between job," I said. "Besides, it gives me a chance to doze out here in this filtered summer sun while the weapons man does the work. But it gets tedious. Before you came, I was right on the point of getting up to start beating him with my new-metal swagger stick loaded with lead, even if he is all-metal new-metal alloy, and doing an excellent job, and probably wouldn't have felt the beating anyway. But just to have something to do, you know. As you perhaps realize, a Stronghold master mustn't do any real work in Moderan. It's against the code." I laughed a little, but strangely I felt nervous in my flesh-strips and vague along the rims of my joins. Why did he look at me that way? Even so, why should the stares of such an insignificant piece of life affect me at all?

Could he talk? He could. Blue soft lips parted and a yel-

low-pink piece of gristly meat jigged up and down in wet slop in his mouth that was raw-flesh red. When this somewhat vulgar performance of meat and air was through, I realize he had said, "We had a little funeral for Son a while ago. We hacked away at the plastic with our poor makeshift grave kits and put him under the crust on time. We hurried. We knew you couldn't guarantee much truce. I come to thank you for what you did."

I shook a little at this strange speech and turn, then recovered myself quickly and waved a steel hand airily, "Consider that I'm thanked," I said. "If you wish a steel flower for a decoration, take one."

He shuddered in all his loose-flesh parts. "I came to thank you," he told me in what I supposed passed for blunt speech in his tribe, "not to be ridiculed." In his stare there was a look of puzzlement and doubt now.

Suddenly I found the whole thing growing quite ludicrous. Here I was, a Moderan man between wars, minding my own business, sitting outside the eleventh Wall of my Stronghold, waiting for the war to resume, and some strange walking lump of sentimentality that I didn't even know existed hurries across from the ninth hill to my left to thank me for a funeral. "You had a good one?" I suggested. Frantically I tried to remember things from the Old Days. The mourners stretched down for a mile? Music—a lot? Flowers—banked all about?

"Just us," he said, "I and his mother. And Son. We hurried. We were sure you couldn't give much time from all the busy times. We thank you for what you did—for the decency."

Decency? Now, what an odd word? What could he mean by decency? "Decency?" I said.

"The rites. You know! We had time for a little prayer. We asked that Son be allowed to live forever in a happy home."

"Listen," I said, a little fed up already with all this, "I don't more than half remember from the Old Days enough about this to discuss it. But you poor flesh mutants bury your dead and then ask that they be allowed to rise and live

again about twenty-five times lighter than a dehumidified air bubble. Isn't that about it? But isn't that taking quite a chance? Why don't you just get wise and do it like we Moderan masters do? Just have that operation while you're young and vigorous, throw away what flesh you don't need, 'replace' yourself with all-metal new-metal alloy 'replacements' and live forever. Feed yourself this pure honey-of-introven extract we've come up with and it's a cinch, you'll have it made. We know what we've got, and we know how to live. . . . And now, if you'll excuse me, according to that report arriving at this very moment over the Warner, those Strongholds that aborted the war seem to be fixed up again. We stopped the blasting because of them so we'll just have to really move now to make up hate-time. I would guess the firing may be a little heavier than you've ever seen it."

Through the last parts of this speech I watched what looked like puzzlement and doubt flicker strangely across his flesh-encumbered countenance. "You stopped the war because—because those two Strongholds aborted in the north? You—you didn't really do it then so we could bury Son and have the decency?!" A cold thought must have wrapped him round; he seemed to shrink and shrivel and go inches shorter right there on the plastic. I marveled anew at the great hard times these flesh things gave themselves with their emotions and their heart palpitations. I thumped my "replaced" chest in a kind of meditation and thanked the lucky iron stars in our splendid new-satellite heavens for my calm-cool condition. "In a little while," I said, "we'll open up this blasting. We're clearing the lines now for first countdown and a general resumption. You see, we try to start even. After that it's every Stronghold for itself to just blast away and make the most expeditious use of the ammo."

He looked at me a long time for some sign of joking. After a while he said in a tone that I supposed with the flesh things passed for great sadness and great resignation, "No, I guess you really didn't stop it so we could bury Son and have the decency. I guess it truly was the aborted Strongholds in the north. I see now I read something true and fine into it and

that true and fine something wasn't there at all. And so I—I came across to thank you for a decency—for nothing—"

I probably nodded ever such a little, or possibly I didn't, because I was hearing the Voice now, hearing the Warner say that all was about in readiness for Great Blast to go and for the masters again to take their positions at the switch panels of War Rooms. "That's it!" I said to no one and nothing in particular. "It'll be double firing now and around-the-day launching of war heads until we make up our time in hate units."

Just as, bidding my weapons man not to forget the hip-snuggie, I was about to turn and go, hustle off to my War Room and resume Great Blast, a cold sound struck through my steel. What was that high whimpering along the plastic? Then I saw. It was the little flesh-bum. He had lost control of his emotions, had fallen down and was now blubbering real tears. 'It's okay, don't be scared," I shouted at him as I turned to hurry. "Keep low in the draws, avoid even halfway up hills and travel swiftly. You'll make it. We fire only at peaks, first go."

But as I passed through the Wall and was bidding the weapons man make all secure, I noticed the little flesh-fellow remained prone, blubbering along the plastic. He was not making any effort to get clear and save himself! And suddenly old Neighboring Stronghold to the east let loose with such a cheating early burst that the little flesh-bum was quite pancaked down indeed even far further than pancaked, as it got him with a deadly Zump bomb that I'm sure was capable of punching him to the center of the earth even as he was being vaporized to high sky and all winds, and I was ever so glad this had fallen just a little bit short of my complex. But as I glanced at the smoking havoc and a large patch of nothing now, where a moment before had been the good plastic earth-cover, I could not help but rejoice that the war was certainly again GO. For the flesh-bum I didn't even try for tears, and nothing in my mind could bring my heart rain as I raced on to the War Room to punch my launch knobs down.

THE ESCAPING

by David R. Bunch

In my small room with the red-cover bed and the two gray shade-drawn windows I would see the Tower, not in the sundown of memory, for indeed I had never been there, but in the moonlight of thinking. And in my thinking it would be a glorious thing, if only four feet tall, with the moon striking down on the tank that would hold my chains, and the platform inviting, empty. A tall form would stand in the street, hale and straight for an instant, in the moonlight of thinking (although *I* am a good five inches less than a decent height), then turn and stride for the goal, in good tread, in good speed, the chains riding easy on two little carriers with wheels, silent and clear of the road. In a celebration of moonglow we would scale the Tower to its very top and easily sit on the platform over the metal tank. The chains would slip silently from the wheeled carriers, down through the slotted holes of the tank, pulling our feet after them, until we sat quite triumphantly in silence measuring the win we had done. Not ashamed of the smallness of our victory, indeed quite not ashamed, we would pull out the gay flaunters we had saved, long and patiently saved, against this hour of our deed. Inflating the two small balloons, one red, one almost impossibly bright green, and tying one each to a wrist, we would sit there gay and victorious in the moonglow, our chains down in the tank, our head up in the stars, from a Tower, but four feet tall. . . . So much for moonglow.

The mornings yawn, the sun comes real, cruel and bright, to magnify our chains. The moonglow is gone and the thinking. It is instinct now, pure instinct and fight, to face them where they snarl. Sure, we have dreamed of elephants, big brown elephants with gold houses on their backs and we in a

house each morning, riding down in triumph, striding down on stately elephant strides to our tank and leaping off so fast onto the platform that no one would see our chains. A clink, a slip, a small tink-rattle and they're gone, down in the tank, the chains quite gone to all the world but us, and we sitting high on the platform, four feet high, blowing up the balloons and stone-facing to the crowd. And the crowd muttering, angry, disappointed, somehow debased, and refusing finally to believe that their victim is truly without his chains. I can see them now, bobbing their tonsured and greasy and bald and curled and shave-cut gray old heads together in small worry-clusters, pecking out their shame and their shameful need, wanting somehow to know, desperately needing to know, that though they may not be there now showing to the air, somehow the chains are still there. They must be! Oh yes, they'll circle the tank; they'll peer and thump and in small-childish spite kick at my elephant, and they'll hate me as I sit so gay with my celebration balloons whipping in a spanking cherry-apple wind on that bloom-filled rejoiceful fair spring day. And some one of them, some desperate bright spiteful one of them, will suddenly think all on a sorry debased instant, "They're in the tank! Probably. He's dropped them down through holes!" Then it will hit them all, like a big wave on a beach hit them, break across them and engulf them with the pleasant wetty thought, "We've got him again! They're in the tank. Probably! He's dropped them down through holes!"

Well—then it will be just a short matter of bringing up the X-ray machines, taking pictures from all sides and all angles and confirming what is to be confirmed. They'll cut in after that, with their big acetylene torches, and some will be on the far side from the heat, with little can openers, busily working, making with the marks, so desperate will be their need to get in through the bottom, expose me and confirm that I still have my chains. The acetylene torches will get in; the can openers will not. But it will be all the same. They'll put my chains out through the bottom of the tank, through the holes they've carved with the acetylene, and they'll pull

my legs out too as far as it is reasonable to do it. And I know I'll make a sorry sight then, my celebration balloons whipping smartly and pertly above, green and red flashes in the apple-cherry-blossom air, my leg chains, feet and legs blooming small common unnecessary arcs, twin-pendulumlike down from the tank holes, and I in between the gaiety and the common shame, grim and exposed and determined.... So much for elephants. So much for Towers and tanks, too, for that matter. But don't think we've been beaten. Defeated? *Oh no!* I've a trick for it; just for this kind of thing. I've a trick.

It is called mooning the sky egg and working up the air. What we do, we stick a structure such as an egg, one with smooth brown walls and little specky windows, up into the sky, up into the blue, high, high, impossibly, almost, high, high as we can go in thought, in any thought. Then we pick a task for the baser one of our selves—everyone being at least two selves as I guess is almost universally unarguably understood—and put him on the rock pile of his job. My self with leg chains, the self that longs to go up on a little Tower for a small victory and a concealment of chains, but never makes it, I have been putting here of late on a job that is called rolling the air, or on a job that is about the equivalent of rolling the air, this job being called unrolling the air. Either of these jobs requires very little or no physical labor, not a prohibitive amount of mental strength or mental health, and either of these jobs can keep a person's self well occupied for quite a long, long time. And sometimes in thinking of it I am at a loss to know why this type, or a closely related type, of work shouldn't just as well be all the people's tasks for a lifetime of achievement.

To roll the air, I first divide, mentally, all the air in my task block into neat, uniform strips, each strip being as wide and as thick as I want it to be for it to make the kind of roll I think will best fit in with the overall air-rolling mission for that day. And this stripping-the-air, as I speak of it, necessarily lends itself to almost, or quite, an infinite number of variations in strip width and strip thickness. I can have every

other strip the same, every third strip the same, side-by-side strips the same, no strips the same, all of the strips the same, five strips the same, then vary four or five or six and on and on. But I do always try to keep to some recognizable pattern, some sense, as it were, in my stripping. And I never start the actual roll part of the job until I have completed the entire stripping of the task block or, as you might say, my complete air area, and have tabbed it in my mind. Then, after stripping the complete air area and tabbing it firmly in my mind, it is just the jolly and diverting task of sitting there on my chains in the middle of the street on an edge of the task block and amidst the smirking, the coughing and the bright sayings of the crowd, starting my roll and winding in! Of course I have to be mentally sharp, up on my toes, as the saying is, to keep each strip stacked with its sister or brother size, which can have a very great bearing on the intensity of my task when it comes to the unrolling part of the job. Because I'm just doing this as a kind of exercise actually, or a diversion in achievement, we could say, and I have absolutely no intention or desire to permanently rearrange the air in the task block or, as we said, the air area. To leave it that way, permanently rearranged, indeed would make me feel unworthy, and from such an act very guilty of a violation of nature.

And up in the sky-high egg, high, high away from the chains, the tanks, the tasks, and all the tonsured, greasy, bald, curled or shave-cut peering heads—all, All! malicious watchers—how goes it? Well, it goes fine there. And how means it? Well, it means fine there. Ummm . . . mm . . . mmm . . . mmmm . . . Oh, the blisses of swaying in the sky-high egg . . .

Afterword:

When I am not writing literary stories (and verse) that pay usually nothing or very close to that, or science-fiction-fantasy stories that pay usually closer to nothing than they should, I earn my living doing things (in a civilian capacity)

for the U.S. Air Forces. Because I do not have to depend upon my writing for a livelihood, I wear no editor's and no publisher's collar when I sit down to that white paper. Which isn't to say that I wouldn't like to earn a living as a writer. But I should also like to keep my writer's soul intact. And since I'm no fool in such matters, I've accepted a compromise. It's a hard compromise really, because the other work takes considerable time and energy away from the writing. But then the whole bit is a bit of a compromise, I suppose, the whole little drama of the kicking and thrashing around between the long sleep of the Before and the longer sleep of the After.

Except in Moderan! In Moderan there is no sleep of the After. Those chaps are designed forever. And do they compromise? You'd better believe they do not! They just sit back at the switch panels of War Rooms for around-the-clock launching of war heads –*varoom varoom varoom*—in their main game of war. And when an uneasy truce flares up, they don't paint flowers or rush off to Sunday school. They are their true-bad selves. They know how to earn mean points in peace as well as in war. And they don't bend or pretend. Hate is their main virtue, as war is their main play. And entirely admirable they, because they have no hypocrisy. They step right out there and say it in the daylight, speak of good launchings, of Strongholds honeycombed and of arms and legs of enemies stacked by the Wall.

So I've overdrawn it. But I'm saying something in both these stories about truth and untruth, as indeed what else does a serious writer ever have in mind? The I in both is true. In one the I suffers a great deal, being a dreamer, from the niggling nagging cares of the everyday world and its people. But he escapes to truth finally in his sky-high egg after first confounding his tormentors and saying something to them in his own way (the absurd air-rolling and unrolling tasks) which they no doubt do not understand. In the other story the I has arrived at truth a long time ago. Just by being a Moderan master, shiny and sure, he is at truth, the cold unarguable truth of the switch panels, the War Rooms, the

"replacements" to live forever, the introven, as opposed to the absurd hopes and unsureties of the flabby flesh-bum and his talk of decency, whatever in the world such an alien word could mean! . . . In one story the I has to escape into fantasy for the world of truth he wants. In the other there is no escape required. He has the world he wants, the only world he knows really, and the only one he can see as possibly workable for a satisfying life forever. The world of the flesh-bum, replete with flesh-hopes and flesh-doubts, is merely an absurdity the Moderan people have left a long time ago and far back.

THE DOLL-HOUSE

Introduction to

THE DOLL-HOUSE:

The act of compiling most anthologies (I observed, prior to starting work on the volume before you) is ludicrously easy. There are men and women who have made whole careers of the act. An act about as complicated as clearing one's throat. I will not for a moment minimize the distillation of taste and selectivity that must be present in the editor for an anthology to be enjoyable and well rounded; it is the sole quality a reader needs to make him an anthologist. (And when even that is absent, why, of course, the book that results is not fit to be purchased.) But essentially, even at its best, the assembling of other men's work into a coherent, or "themed," grouping is not a particularly laboring labor. It merely requires a complete backlog of old pulp magazines, a number of friends with eidetic memories, and a clear line to the copyright office to ascertain what is in the public domain.

The book in your hands is rather another matter. I don't intend to make any great claims for myself as an anthologist, or suggest that some special kind of bravery was necessary to take on the job (only a special kind of stupidity). But this book entailed the actual prodding and pushing of specific writers to unleash themselves, to open up fully and write stories they had perhaps always wanted to write, but had never felt they could sell. It took the laborious months of sifting through manuscript after manuscript to find stories that were offbeat and compelling enough to live up to the advance publicity this book has received, and be as rich and explosive as I felt they had to be to justify the existence of DANGEROUS VISIONS. Not just "another anthology" was good enough. It was, then, not simply the collecting of crumbling pulp-paper tearsheets or mildewed carbons from scriveners' trunks, but the creation of almost an entity, a living thing.

The initial list of contributors I hoped would appear in the final version to be published was constantly revised. One writer was desperately ill, another was in a two-year slump, a third was so shackled by his wife's doctor's bills he had contracted to do a garbage novel under another man's more famous by-line, and still another had left the country on assignment from a major slick publication. Revise, revise, grope and revise. And when it seemed impossible to build the meat of the book as I wanted it—in the early stages I panicked more readily than now—I contacted the literary agents and sent them the prospectus for the book, asking them to select submissions carefully.

From one agent I received string-bundled stacks of refuse dredged out of reject drawers. (One ms. in one batch had a reject note from Dorothy McIlwraith, editor of the long-defunct *Weird Tales*, stuck inside. I hesitated to think how long *that* one had been kicking around.) From another agent I received incredibly inferior work by a top-name professional in the mainstream. From a third I received a story so blatantly licentious it must certainly have been written for one of those "private printings" we hear about. That it was dreadfully bad must have been the reason for its not having been sold, for the sexual explications in it were sufficient to get it in print at least in *Eros*. But from my own agent, Robert P. Mills (a very good agent indeed), I received only two submissions. Both of which I bought. One was by John Sladek, elsewhere in this volume; the second was "The Doll-House" by James Cross.

I confess I had never heard of James Cross before receiving this story. He was not known to me as a science fiction writer, which isn't odd because ordinarily he isn't one. In point of fact, there is no such person as "James Cross". He is a pseudonym. He has asked that his true name be kept privileged information, and so it shall be, here at least. Thus it is no wonder I looked upon this manuscript as perhaps just another quickie submission, one of the scatter-gun offerings I had been getting from the agents. I should have known better. Bob Mills does not work that way. "The Doll-House"

is a bravura effort. It is as singular and effective a story as John Collier's "Evening Primrose" or Richard Matheson's "Born of Man and Woman" or Charles Beaumont's "Miss Gentibelle". It is a one-time happening. It is part science fiction and almost entirely fantasy and completely chilling.

Of "Cross", the author writes the following:

"For a year now I have been both professor of sociology at George Washington University and associate director of the university's Social Research Group, where my current assignment is directing a national study on the incidence of various psychosomatic symptoms and the use of psychotropic drugs among the adult population of the United States.

"Before that, for more than a decade, I was involved in specialized foreign research for the U.S. Information Agency and other branches of the government—work dealing with the collection of sociological and psychological intelligence and with the measurement of propaganda effectiveness. This particular type of research was my field since the beginning of World War II. Earlier, I was a newspaperman. I have degrees from Yale, Columbia and Southern California.

"I live in Chevy Chase, Maryland. I am happily married and have four interesting (if sometimes deplorable) children, ranging down from eighteen to two. My wife is a very good public relations consultant. In my spare time, when I am not writing, I am reading, sleeping, eating, traveling, playing golf or tennis, or watching ball games on TV. In the course of my life I have: been a theatrical press agent; taught at three universities; played semi-pro ball (left-handed knuckle ball and "junk" pitcher); been a naval officer and later a foreign service officer; written and acted in an abortive educational TV show.

" 'James Gross' is a pen name. I started using it because: (a) I publish articles in various professional journals under my given name, and I did not want to get the two entities mixed up or give reviewers a chance at the easy jibe that as a

writer of suspense novels I was a good sociologist and as a sociologist a good writer of suspense novels; (b) most of my writing was done while I worked for the government and had to be cleared in advance even fiction. 'James Cross' was a way of making me unofficial.

"I have had four novels published to date: *Root of Evil, The Dark Road, The Grave of Heroes,* and in February 1967 Random House brought out *To Hell for Half-a-Crown,* a suspense novel with an international setting. All have appeared in hardcover and paperback reprint and have been translated into such languages as French, Italian, Swedish, Dutch and Norwegian. *The Dark Road* was serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post.* I have had two book club sales, but since they were Swedish and Dutch, the circulation was relatively limited and did not make me rich. Pity."

Ellison again. Thus "James Cross" prepares us for that for which there is no preparation: a genuine experience. "The Doll-House" is a marvelous story.

Those of you with tiny daughters will never again, after reading this story, be able to watch them playing on the floor with their Barbie dolls in their playhouses, without a chill quiver of memory.

THE DOLL-HOUSE

by James Cross

"Two hundred and fifty dollars for your lousy Alumnae Fund," Jim Eliot said, holding the canceled check in his hand. "What the hell do you think they're going to do with it—name some building after you, the Julia Wardell Eliot memorial gateway?"

His wife looked at him coldly.

"Just because you went to the sort of place that gets its money from the state legislature, and all the professors are under civil service . . ."

"All right, all right, knock it off—only next time try balancing the checkbook first; you're lucky it didn't bounce. How the hell much do you think we have in the account?"

"How do I know? You're the great brain, you check the balance."

"About twenty-five dollars, plus my pay check tomorrow—$461.29 exactly, after deductions. And next week the mortgage, and the gas and electricity, and oil, and the doctor and the dentist and the car payments, and any bill you've run up for clothes."

"I've run up! Like the $250 cashmere suit you had to have last month. And the new golf clubs, and the credit card lunches—why don't you get on an expense account like everyone else?"

"All right," Eliot said wearily, "just let me balance the goddam account. If something's going to bounce I want to know about it."

"You just do that, lover," Julia said. "I'm going to bed and don't wake me when you come up."

She swung around toward the door, the silk taffeta of her red housecoat rustling like a swarm of cicada—$99.75, Eliot thought savagely, Saks-Fifth Avenue. But the anger left him slowly as he thought of the bills, his as much as Julia's, the children's, the American way of life. Mortgage; country club; schools; lessons—for Christ's sake, dancing, and swimming and golf and tennis and ballet and the slide trombone; Dr. Smedley, the orthodontist, twenty-five bucks every time he tightened a screw on Pamela's braces; Michael at prep school and his J. Press sport jackets that seemed to average four a year; Julia's charge accounts and Dr. Himmelfarb at thirty dollars an hour because she was bored and scared, and pretty soon he'd be a candidate for the good doctor's couch himself; and, he forced himself to admit, his own clothes, his bar bills, the golf clubs, the expensive women he took out from time to time when he called Julia and told her he'd have to stay over in town. And above all, he thought, above all, me, myself, for allowing any of us to live this way, when I make $15,000 a year. But what can I do? he thought. In a

couple or three years there'll be the vice-presidency open when old Calder retires; and I have to live as if I already had it, and if I don't they won't consider me—"not real executive timber"—and I'll end up like Charlie Wainwright good old Charlie chief cashier, with the small gold watch and the smaller pension.

There was a storm blowing up, the wind was rising, he could feel the too large house, with its second mortgage, creaking in the wind and calling out for money and more money, not just the extra personal loan he was paying off at usurious rates, but big money, a bundle, the long green.

He sat down wearily at the desk and began to figure it out. But even with the hypothetical Christmas bonus, he would still be in the red. For a while he could juggle bills, forget the doctor and dentist, stave off creditors, but sooner or later they would get nasty (while the new bills kept pouring in) and garnishee his salary, and that would be the end of him at the bank. It was two before he crawled into bed.

The next day was Saturday and he was up early, still groggy with fatigue, while the rest of the house slept. He left a note for Julia, saying he would be back in the afternoon, and then he drove north, toward his last hope.

It was not much of a hope. John Wardell, Julia's uncle, had never liked him and had never hidden his feelings. He had always let Eliot know he considered him a provincial *arriviste* who had had the insolence to marry into a fine old New England family. With his endowed Harvard chair, with his world-wide reputation as an authority on classical civilization, he made Eliot feel like some sort of trousered and bearded Goth trespassing in the Roman Senate. But Uncle John was retired now; he lived well in an old farmhouse upstate; he traveled to Greece and Italy every summer, he wintered in the West Indies. He should have a lot to leave Julia, his only relative, and Jim Eliot wanted to get some of it now, when they needed it, not later when it would just be extra income.

The huge black dog who began barking at him savagely, straining at its chain-link leash, reminded Eliot of the Ro-

man hound from the Pompeian mural. *Cave canem*, he thought, standing back nervously, stretching out a carefully placating hand and waiting for someone to call the beast off. In a minute or two the front door opened and John Wardell stood there in corduroys and a red flannel shirt.

"Down, Brennus," he said, "quiet, boy."

The hound sat back impassively and Eliot walked by him nervously, with his hand outstretched.

"Well, Jim," John Wardell said, giving him a perfunctory handshake, "I don't see you here often; you must be in trouble. Come in and have a drink."

It took a long time to get it out—three drinks, in fact—but in the end Eliot told it all to the old man who hated him.

"It's not for myself, it's for Julia and the kids. If I don't get some help, we're dead."

"Of course, of course, Jim," the old man said, "I know you're not thinking about yourself. But just the same," he said, smiling maliciously, "I don't see any way out of it—unless you start embezzling from the bank."

Eliot jerked his head nervously, as if the old man were reading his mind. Then he forced a smile.

"I was thinking you might be able to tide us over for a while . . . Uncle John," he added, gravely and sincerely.

John Wardell began to laugh.

"You think I have money, Jim? You think Julia has expectations? You're waiting for dead men's shoes? Good God, all I have is my pension, and not much of that, and the big annuity I bought years ago. That takes care of it all. There's enough for me to live on, and it ends when I die."

Eliot looked at him hopelessly and extended his glass for a refill. Oblivious of the old man's clinical, detached amusement.

"The hell of it is," he said loudly, "If I had a bit of money, I couldn't lose. I could spread the risks. The trend is up. I could be rich."

"But you have even less than nothing, Jim," the old man said, "you owe more than you possess. Even if you could

know the future, you couldn't raise enough to make it worth while."

"If I knew the future," Eliot said, "I could get hold of the money somehow."

"Is that all you want, Jim? That's really pretty simple. All you need is an oracle to consult—or a sibyl, as the Romans called it. You ask the questions, and the god gives you the answer through his priestess. No house should be without one."

For a while Eliot had thought that the old man had softened to him. Now, looking at the over-red cynical lips below the hawk nose and the white halo of hair, he knew that the fires were only banked.

"How would you like your own oracle, Jim?"

"If you're not going to help, don't needle me."

"There's a story in Petronius about an oracle in a bottle in Cumae. You just feed her regularly and she lives forever. Could you use something like that?"

"I'm going," Eliot said, struggling to his feet unsteadily.

"This is no joke, Jim. I've owed you a wedding present for eighteen years, and now I think I'll give you one. Just sit down."

John Wardell left the room, and in two minutes returned carrying a small doll-house. He put it carefully on the table. Eliot looked at it curiously. It was not the standard Victorian-mansion doll-house but strangely reminiscent of something he had seen ten years ago, on his one trip to Europe, at Pompeii.

The old man looked at him carefully.

"You recognize it? The house of the Vettii at Pompeii. In perfect scale. Look at the atrium and the pool, the rooms to the sides. I bought it there."

Eliot lowered his head to gaze through the gate into the atrium and the pool. From that position he could see nothing else; but he remembered that with most doll-houses the roof was hinged and could be lifted so as to give a bird's-eye view of the interior. He fumbled around the side of the model looking for a hook to unfasten. For a moment he

thought he heard a scurrying noise inside the doll-house. He drew back his hand sharply, brushing against the structure and almost knocking it off the table.

"Leave it alone," John Wardell said, suddenly and sharply. "Don't look at the Oracle, she doesn't like it. Never do it, on your life."

"Are you trying to say there's something inside?"

"I don't need to, you heard her move. But don't open it, ever."

"How does it operate, then?" Eliot asked, humoring the old man.

"Do you see that empty pool past the atrium? Well, write your question on a slip of paper, fold it up and put it in the pool. Get a tiny bowl and fill it with milk sweetened with honey and push it inside the gateway. Then go away and the next morning take the piece of paper from the pool. There will be an answer written on it."

"Can you make it work faster?"

"Sometimes it can be done, but I wouldn't advise you to try. It stirs things up."

"Can't you make it work right now? Show me."

John Wardell shrugged his shoulders. Then he went to the kitchen and returned with a dried bay leaf. He lit it, holding it until it smoked aromatically. Then he pushed it into the doll house, watching the pungent vapor curl through it.

"Now," he said, "what you want to know. Anything. Write it down quickly."

Eliot tore off a slip of paper and wrote on one side of it, "Who will win the World Series?" Then he folded it and slipped it into the empty pool.

"All right," John Wardell said, "we have to leave. Bring the bottle."

When they returned in half an hour, the pungent bay-leaf vapor had died out. Wardell leaned down and reached into the doll-house. In his hand was a folded piece of paper which he handed to Eliot.

Eliot unfolded it and read it quickly. The he read it more slowly.

"*Fringillidae sunt*," he quoted. "What kind of crap is that?"

"The second word is easy," John Wardell said. "It means they (the winners) are.' But *Fringillidae*, wait a minute."

He pulled out the third volume of a twenty-volume classical dictionary, thumbed through it for a minute or two, then shook his head.

"It's a new word to me. I've never seen it."

"Then what the hell good is it?"

"I should have told you, the Oracle uses several languages and she tends to be obscure. You know—'If King Croesus crosses the river Halys with his army, he will destroy a mighty empire'—which one? Well, as it turned out, his own. He just didn't read it right."

"Don't worry about me, I can figure it out."

"Well, in that case you have no troubles."

There was a tinge of unpleasant mockery in Uncle John's voice, as though he knew something very nasty about Eliot, something the younger man should also sense about himself, something, above all, at which he should bridle if he owned the sensitivity to understand or the touchy sense of personal honor to take offense.

Then, abruptly, Eliot caught himself. This was advanced senility talking. He wanted money, a life preserver, a hook to fasten into the mountain from which he was falling, and here this crazy and slightly malevolent old bastard was offering him dreams and fantasies.

"Look, I don't know how you worked this dime store Cassandra, but if it isn't too much bother, would you mind telling me how this—this *Oracle* happened? I mean, what the hell is she? Where did she come from?"

"You really don't know?" the old man asked him. "No, I forgot, you wouldn't, of course. I imagine you majored in business administration, or salesmanship, or art appreciation at that educational cafeteria you attended."

Like uncle, like niece, Eliot thought savagely, remembering Julia's taunts the night before. You'd think I was some kind of a savage because I didn't go to Harvard. For a

moment he was tempted to walk out, but his need and desperation were too great; and, too, for the first time in their association, he told himself he could sense something different from the cold, mocking hostility with which the old man normally treated him, as if Eliot had advanced from the status of outsider to that of bungling, inferior relative, but nonetheless relative. Or perhaps to the status of a large, stupid, clumsy dog with annoying habits, but still not completely outside.

"The Cumaean Sibyl," Uncle John went on, "as you would know if you had been given a decent education, was believed to be immortal. Originally, she was a young priestess of Apollo, and the god spoke through her lips when she was in a trance and foretold the future to those who asked. There were half a dozen such priestesses operating, but the one at Cumae took the fancy of the god Apollo and he gave her two presents—the gift of prophecy and immortality. Like any other mortal suitor, he was fatuously in love—but not completely so: when he caught his girl friend out on the grass one night with a local fisherman, he couldn't take away the gifts he had granted her, but he had wisely held back on giving her eternal youth to go along with immortality. And just to make sure there would be no more young fishermen, he reduced her to the size of a large mouse, shut her up in a box and turned her over to the priests of the temple to use for all eternity."

"You believe all this hogwash?"

Uncle John almost shrugged. There was too much uncertainty in the gesture for it to have been called a definite movement.

"I don't know really. There is a story in Livy that the second king of Rome talked with the immortal oracle at Cumae, and that was around 700 B.C. And then a contemporary reference in Petronius seven or eight hundred years after indicates that the same person, or maybe creature, was alive in his day, still functioning. I've tried to find out on several occasions, to go beyond the myths, but each time I get a reply that only confuses me more. Maybe she

fell from the sky and couldn't get back. Maybe you'd feel more scientific and rational if I talked in terms of slipping over from another continuum, another frame of illusion, some other . . ."

"Oh, Christ, cut the crap," Eliot said under his breath. Then aloud, "What is it inside—a cockroach, a mouse, or what? How do you do the writing trick? Is it like the old money machine?"

"As long as you don't open the top and try to find out and as long as it tells you what will be, what does it matter? If you find it more comforting to believe I'm a trainer of rodents or lice, or am lapsing into senility, then do so. Or if your conception of the universe is too limited to accept a miracle—from Mars or the Moon, or the past or the future, or *wherever*—then leave it by all means, and we'll both consider this visit fruitless. All I can tell you is that I bought it a few years ago somewhere between Cumae and the ruins of Pompeii, that I got it cheap and that I've seen it work. *'La vecchia religione'*—the old religion, the man said, and he wanted a quick sale—probably dug it up illegally."

The old kook really believes it, Eliot thought. He found himself looking at the older man with growing disquiet. Not for a moment did he believe that within the doll-house was the Oracle of Pompeii or Cumae or wherever the hell it came from; but the old man seemed convinced of it, and he had learned not to underestimate the old man. Could it be? Had the night suddenly opened like a giant mouth, just beyond his peripheral range of understanding, and belched forth a genuine miracle? He decided to go along with the weird . . .

"Look," Eliot said suddenly. "I believe you about the money. You just have the pension and annuity. Otherwise you're broke; and so am I. But will you sell it to me? I can't pay now, but if this thing works, I'll have plenty, I've got some angles figured out already. Just put a price on it."

"No," the old man said. "Just take it as a delayed wedding

present. You can have it. I know all I want about the future at my age. Like a fool, last year I asked it how long I would live—and it's not pleasant to know."

Uncle John Wardell paused and looked at Eliot with an odd expression. It was a very brief pause and a moment later the old man had resumed his normal controlled and guarded look; but in that transitory second Eliot, impervious as he usually was to other people's unexpressed feelings, had read the cold despairing hatred of someone who is going to die for someone who is going to live.

"Go on, take it," the old man continued. "Just remember to feed the Oracle every night, milk and honey. Don't open the top of the house. She doesn't like to be disturbed or looked at. Leave your question at night, but don't expect an answer until the morning. Don't try to rush her."

"I really appreciate this," Eliot said.

"Nothing at all," the old man replied, smiling oddly. "Don't thank me yet. You can show yourself out, I imagine."

When Eliot got home, he was surprised to find that Julia was rather touched that he had visited Uncle John on his own. She was warm and affectionate, and it was not until late at night that he was able to go quietly out to the car, while she slept, and take the doll-house down to the little plyboard room in the cellar that was his undisturbed private study.

On Monday he took the slip of paper to the public library and asked for a translation. In the ensuing days he made ten phone calls unavaillingly, while the World Series became locked at three games apiece and the bookmakers' odds fluctuated wildly. Finally, two days after the end of the Series, the slip of paper got to a reference librarian who had majored in zoology as an undergraduate. *Fringillidae*, Eliot was told, was a genus of birds of which the North American cardinal was among the best known.

He stood there, scratching his head, two days too late to collect on the victory of the St. Louis Cardinals. It was then that he realized that the predictions of the Oracle were

sometimes too obscure to be of value, sometimes too late to profit by.

In the next weeks he tested the Oracle, each night faithfully putting out the bowl of milk and honey, each morning when he had left a question, patiently pulling out the answer. He was becoming satisfied with the tests.

In late October he asked the oracle who would win the presidential election and got the answer: *filius Johanni victor est.* By that time he had invested in a Latin dictionary and had no difficulty in translating the less than elegant Latin (after all, the Oracle was Greek by birth), "The son of John is the victor," a day or so before he read the headlines, "Johnson Landslide".

But he was still cautious. The next week he asked the Oracle whether he should buy Space Industries, Ltd., of Canada, selling at two cents a share. The two words "*caveat emptor,*" warned him off, so that it was with little surprise that he read the next month that the shares had dropped to nothing and that the officers of the company had been indicted.

As a last test, he asked the Oracle when John Wardell would die. He was still looking at the reply, "*ille fuit*", when the long-distance call for Julia told them that the old man had died that night in his sleep. Poor old boy, Eliot thought as he sat through the interminable funeral services. We had our quarrels, but at the end I guess he was coming around to like me after all. He wanted to do me a favor -at last.

One of the best clients of the bank, and a man whom Jim Eliot had dealt with for five years, was in the undyed cloth end of the textile business. To hear Max Siegal tell it, it seemed relatively simple: You bought up a lot of undyed cloth—often on credit—you figured what colors would be in fashion in the coming season, then you had your cloth dyed and resold at a profit. But it was a lot more complicated and dangerous than that. If you guessed wrong, you could be left with a few hundred thousand dollars' worth of cloth dyed the wrong colors. If that happened, you could hold it, paying storage costs, for years until the colors came in again;

you could sell it at a loss; or you could have it redyed and hope to God that the cost of redying wouldn't put you out of business. Max Siegal had shown an uncanny knack of anticipating the fashionable colors, and the bank had been glad to give him short-term loans, since they had always been repaid before they became due.

"All right, Max," Jim Eliot said over the second luncheon martini, "there'll be no trouble over the loan. You know your credit's good. By the way, what's the color this year?"

"You thinking of taking a flyer, Jim? Forget it, you get paid regularly every two weeks. Bank your money."

"It's just so I can give Julia a little fashion preview."

"Well, I'm going forest green, one hundred per cent."

That night Eliot asked the Oracle the question and in the morning had the answer, "*ex Tyre ad Caesarem.*" It was easy enough to read—"from Tyre to Caesar'—but it didn't make sense to him. He tried the library again, and this time learned in ten minutes that the city of Tyre manufactured a rare purple dye that was reserved for the Roman emperors.

Jim Eliot handled a few investment accounts, and the best of them was about $500,000 owned by an out-of-town spinster whom he rarely saw, an elderly woman who usually left matters entirely in the hands of the bank provided the returns remained at a level of better than five per cent. At any given time, about a tenth of the estate was in savings accounts waiting to be transferred into a more profitable investment; another tenth was in cash in a safe deposit box, as the old lady insisted. It was the first time for Eliot, and his hands were sweating as he took $10,000 from the safe deposit box.

With the cash, he bought $10,000 worth of undyed cloth and then arranged with a dyer for thirty days' credit. When he specified the color—royal purple—the man looked at him as if he wanted to cancel the agreement. But Eliot was beyond fear by now. "Purple," he said, "royal purple, all of it."

It was the next week when Max Siegal called him for lunch.

"Jim," he said, "I'm in real trouble. I've just seen the advances on *Vogue*, and this year it's purple, royal purple, and here I am stuck with forest green."

"You want another loan, Max?"

"It's too late. By the time I got the cloth dyed, the market would be flooded. Everybody would have switched. The green I could take a loss on and wait for next year; but if I could lay my hands on the purple, I could still break even."

"Suppose you could get your hands on about $10,000 worth of cloth that had been dyed royal purple?"

"I'd pay $25,000 and still make a good profit."

The next Monday, Jim Eliot cashed Siegal's check, paid the dyer, put the $10,000 back in the safe deposit box, beefed up his checking account with the balance. It was enough to pay off the more pressing debts, to retire much of the second mortgage, to pay up the loan at the personal finance company; but at the end of it he was still broke and the bills continued to roll in. One coup wasn't enough.

One of the most frequently traded stocks on the market was that of a gold mine in Asia, which fluctuated daily between a dollar and a dollar and a half. It was common knowledge on Wall Street that if ever the price of gold went up there would be a killing. Elliot asked the question of the Oracle and got the answer, this time in English, "The sea will be as full of gold as it is of fishes." There was something odd about the wording, and he waited. Next week he learned, knocking wood gratefully, of a new process of extracting gold from sea water which caused the price of gold to plummet all over the world.

He was not in a position where simply avoiding loss was enough. What he needed was a favorable answer, something he could act upon. The bills continued to pour in and the bank account was again down to about a hundred dollars. He was getting sick of obscure answers from the Oracle and answers in foreign languages. He wrote a note demanding

clear messages in English. The next morning he got his reply: "*Vox dei multas linguas habet* [The voice of the god has many tongues]."

Very funny, Eliot thought; and that night he deliberately neglected the daily feeding. The bowl was put in its place, but he left it empty of milk and honey. He repeated his demand. He burned bay leaves. In the morning there was still no answer. It went on like that for a week. Occasionally, when he put his ear close to the doll-house, he could hear a scurrying around inside, and once, he thought, a small voice crying out. But there was no answer and he realized that something that could live two thousand years could fast for quite a long time.

Wednesday night was a bad one. He had forgotten to answer a letter from one of his accounts, and the indignant old gentleman had written directly to the president of the bank to complain. When he got home, there was a letter from Michael's school reminding him that tuition for the year was overdue. Then Julia, very handsome in new gold lamé stretch pants and leopard-skin pullover, looked up from the pitcher of martinis she was stirring, to tell him that she had signed Pamela up for elocution lessons—"it's the braces, darling, they make her mumble"—and Charm School sessions; that the washing machine had broken down for good; that the Durkees next door had a new station wagon; that it was about time they got a full-time, live-in maid, even if they had to build a new room on the house; and, finally, that Pongo, the cat, needed a series of vitamin shots.

Eliot drank five martinis before dinner and afterwards dozed in a chair. When he awoke, it was past one; Julia was already asleep. He ran cold water on his head and neck. Then he made himself a long scotch and sat thinking. After a while he headed for the cellar, with Pongo, the fat, sullen, castrated tomcat, under his arm, squirming and miaowing.

It was Julia's fancy occasionally to walk Pongo on a leash as if he were a dog. On his way to the cellar, Eliot rummaged

in a kitchen drawer and found the ornate leash with its twisted silver wire threads, and attached it to the cat's rhinestone-studded collar. When he got close to the doll-house he tied the end of the leash securely to a pipe. Pongo sat there licking himself lazily.

Eliot went to the doll-house and reached along one side of the roof for the tiny catch that held it in place, and flipped it open. For a moment he remembered how old Wardell had warned him about looking inside the doll-house. Then he swung the roof over on its hinges. He pointed a standing lamp downward and peered carefully inside. In one of the small rooms off the atrium he could see what looked like a tiny old woman lying on a couch. She was about six inches long, and dressed in a dark robe. She turned her head and stared at Eliot, coldly and viciously.

He lifted her up, holding her firmly between curved middle finger and the two adjoining ones, as a fisherman holds an eel; but the wriggling was very feeble. Then he brought her close to the cat. For a moment he thought Pongo would break the leash. The cat strained forward, crying horribly with the need to put its teeth into the small, warm creature. Only a few inches separated the two. Eliot could see the frustrated cat's jaws move and hear the frenzied click-click of its teeth. He brought the doll-woman still closer, so close that he could feel the cat's breath and its sprayed spittle on the back of his hand. The little body held between his fingers was trembling weakly. Then Pongo began to howl. After a moment Eliot put the Oracle back on her couch and closed the roof of the doll-house. He left the message he had been leaving for many nights, but again he left the feeding bowl empty.

The next morning there was a message for him—"ask and it shall be answered."

That night he resumed feeding the Oracle.

The next day he borrowed $5,000 from the same account he had used before, and that night he posed the question. There was no time now to wait for a stock to rise or a business opportunity; he was near bankruptcy; indeed, he

would be bankrupt when all the bills came in. All he wanted was three winners; a three-horse parlay. Even if they were all the favorites, he would clear about $100,000, put back what he had borrowed, clean up the debts and be left with capital to use again.

In the morning the three names were there on the slip of paper. He copied them down carefully into a notebook: Sun-Ray, Snake-killer, and Apollo: first, second, and third races at the local track.

At the $100 window, he bought fifty tickets on Sun-Ray, and a few minutes later in his seat by the finish line, watched the odds drop from 5-3 down to 3-2. Even so, he thought, that would be $12,500 to bet on the second race. He did not even wait to see the finish. In the stretch, Sun-Ray was seven lengths ahead and pulling away. He was close to the front of the line of winners, cashing in their tickets.

There was a little delay in cashing his tickets. He was forced to give his name and address, and back it up with his operator's license—"for the tax boys," the cashier told him apologetically, counting out $12,500. Oh, Christ, Eliot thought, I forgot Mr. Big, there won't be much left after he's taken it off the top. Next time, he thought, next time, I'll stick to capital gains, once I get out of this hole.

At the $100 window, he put it all on Snake-killer. For a moment he wondered whether it would be safer to keep out the original $5,000 he'd have to replace the next day; but there was no use playing it safe now, he was in too deep. Snake-killer he didn't like. No better than even money on the board, once his bet was down; but he had Apollo in the third at 10-1, and even when he put $24,000 down, the odds woud at least stay at 4-1 or 5-1.

He didn't leave his position early during the second race. It was too close. He stood there, cold with fear, while Snake-killer and an unknown filly battled it out nose and nose. Then he saw the number go up on the board and realized Snake-killer had won. His breath came very fast, his eyes were blurred with sweat and he slumped in his seat.

Then Eliot sprinted to the pay-off window, feeling his

heart pounding. There was not much time until the third and, for him, final race. Again he was asked to identify himself and quickly gave his name and address.

In a couple of minutes he was on his way to the $100 window, with $25,000 to bet on Apollo, and was soon pushing a huge strip of tickets into his pocket. Again, for half a second, he kicked himself mentally for not holding out the original $5,000 he had taken from the account. Tomorrow morning it goes back, he told himself, first thing tomorrow. He looked up at the odds on the board: even after his huge bet, still 5-1; $125,000 for him in about five minutes.

This time he didn't even go out to the track, but stood there by the cashiers watching the board and waiting for the number 11, Apollo, to go up. It was very fast. He heard the roar that greeted the start, then a rising uneven crescendo of sound as the horses disappeared around the turn; the final roar as they came into the home-stretch; then something approaching silence as number 11 went up. Eliot turned from the board and walked rapidly to the cashier, holding out his tickets. Right at the track, he thought, there's a branch of my bank. I'll pay it right in, except for the $5,000. But, by God, my own separate savings account. Nothing Julia can get at.

"Just a minute," the cashier said. "There's a foul claim against Apollo going up."

Eliot smiled confidently. The smile was still on his face when the cashier turned to him again.

"Your bad day, buddy. They just disqualified Apollo. Better tear them tickets up."

Eliot looked around and saw the 11 coming down, and number 4, the place-horse, going up in its stead.

"They can't," he said, "she told me . . ."

He stumbled aside, looking for a long time at the board, hoping that in some impossible way there could be an appeal against the appeal. But nothing happened, and after a while he went home.

On the train he looked again at the whole message. "These will run the fastest tomorrow: Sun-Ray, Snake-

killer, Apollo." Oh, Christ, he thought, the bitch tricked me again—"run the fastest," nothing about fouling. This time I'll let the cat play with her a little.

When he got home there was no one there. Only a note from Julia. "Pamela is at a pajama party at the Evans'. I'm going to the movies. Food in refrigerator. Pongo is in the cellar, be sure to put him out."

He sat drinking rapidly. Five thousand dollars short. There was no way to raise it. Two mortgages on the house; no equity in the cars; he had already borrowed on his life insurance. And one of these days old Miss Winston would suddenly turn up at the bank, as she always did, and count the money in the safe deposit box. Or the examiners would make their check. If only there were some way to be sure with that lousy Oracle. There's still a lot left in the safe deposit box. I could try it again. I won't get any longer sentence if they catch me. This time, he said, I'll really starve her out; this time I'll let the cat have her for a while till she calls out to me for help.

He was quite drunk when he remembered Julia's note and stumbled down to the cellar to let the cat out. At first he didn't really notice Pongo over in a corner of his study; he only took note that the cat was there, glancing rapidly out of one corner of his eye, as he went quickly to the doll-house, holding the cat's leash in one hand.

He looked at the doll-house. The entrance was a ruin. The thin wood and papier-mâché had been torn aside, and he could see deep scratch marks around the pool where claws had searched. He opened the catch quickly and swung back the roof. The couch on which the Oracle had rested was on its side in a corner of the little room, in pieces. There was no one inside the doll-house.

In the far corner Pongo purred ecstatically. Eliot came slowly toward the cat, as it crouched down defensively over something in its two paws that looked like a crumpled piece of dark cloth. Eliot brought the leash down on the cat's shoulders savagely, watching it scurry away, leaving whatever it had been playing with.

He picked it up. It was only a torn tube of black cloth with something crushed inside. If he had not felt the dark stains on the garment and held his finger up to the light to see the little smear of blood on it, he would have thought it was simply a headless doll.

Julia, among her other traits, suffered from an exaggerated fear of burglars; but once Eliot had bought the stubby .38 Bankers Special revolver, she had made him keep it, not in the night table by his bed -she was equally terrified of guns—but in a desk drawer in his cellar study, locked.

The key was on his key ring, and he opened the drawer quickly and took out the revolver, weighing it in his hand. He went over to the doll-house swinging the revolver. He looked inside once more on the wild, impossible chance that the Oracle was still there, that the old woman had somehow escaped the cat. But the doll-house was empty, or rather, almost empty; because there was a scrap of paper in one corner of the pool.

He picked it up. When shall I die, he thought, and read the last message he was to get—"*ille die* [today]."

When the revolver went off in the enclosed cellar, it was as loud as artillery.

The movie that Julia saw was a double feature. Neither picture was much good, but she was thrifty in small things and once she had paid for her ticket would sit through hours of clumsy triteness. When she got back to the house she parked the car and came in through the carport entrance to the kitchen. It looked as though a chef had gone crazy. On the shelves, boxes and bottles were knocked on their sides. The spice cabinet hanging on the wall was askew, and on the kitchen table an opened bottle of bay leaves spilled out its aromatic contents.

She cleaned them up mechanically, almost without thought, then she looked for her husband. He was not in the living room or the bedroom, so at last she looked for him in the cellar study. When she entered the cellar, the lights were off in the main section but she could see a faint yellow glow

escaping under the study door. She switched on the overhead light.

Pongo the cat was on the floor, stiff and ungainly with a pool of blood around him. For a moment she wondered what had happened; then she saw the revolver tossed on the floor by the dead cat's ruined head. She went up to the door of the study. All she could hear was a low monotonous repetition of words she could not understand. She opened the door slowly and carefully.

The first thing that struck her was the harshly aromatic smell of burning bay leaves and the curl of blue-gray smoke from a little copper ash tray.

Her husband was kneeling in front of a large doll-house at one end of the room. His left hand held a small wooden bowl, and incongruously, in his right hand was a half-filled milk bottle that he was pouring into the bowl. She called to him sharply, but he did not answer. Then she went forward. The top of the doll-house was raised. She had never looked inside it before so she craned forward eagerly. All she could see was a courtyard with an empty pool, and several small rooms surrounding it. In one of them there seemed to be a little antique couch, with something lying on it. After a moment Eliot turned to look at her blindly. Then he reached into the doll-house and took from the couch what looked like a tiny rag doll. He began to talk to it, crooning in a language she did not know, ignoring her completely. He was still on his knees crooning when she went upstairs, and he had not moved much later when the ambulance arrived.

Afterword:

To re-create the steps that lead to the writing of a short story normally requires something close to total recall, unless you are one of those very methodical writers who make a point of jotting story ideas, development and progress down in a notebook. In the case of "The Doll-House," however, I do have a pretty clear recollection of how it got started.

I was with my son Brian, then two years old, and we were looking at the fantastic doll-house in the old Smithsonian building here. Brian was fascinated by some of the puppets in the old doll-house, and asked whether they were "real people," did they move around, and so on. I thought of M. R. James's story of the eighteenth-century doll-house where the puppets did come alive after midnight, in a very gruesome way; but obviously I couldn't re-use that for an idea. For no particular reason, I then thought of the Palazzo Vettii at Pompeii, and how that handsome Roman summerhouse would make a wonderfull doll-house. Then, being mentally in the Naples area, I remembered the story in Petronius about the Oracle who had been somehow captured and imprisoned in a bottle. Then I thought of my son's question again, and the various avenues of thought became enmeshed with each other and took on a rough shape and pattern. (All this took place in about thirty seconds.) On the way home I began thinking more deliberately and systematically; and by the time I got there I had a story idea pretty well roughed out in my head. This is the way that I find I have to work most stories out—using every stimulus and every scrap of time available; because I have always had a full-time job and have written for pleasure, relaxation, because I find it hard *not* to write.

The danger part of the "dangerous vision" in my story is really there from the beginning. Jim Eliot is a would-be *arriviste* who has not arrived, someone with a great future behind him. He would like to be"upwardly mobile," as the sociologists put it, in fact as well as in temperament. He has married upwardly, he is living in a very expensive exurb in the hopes that his income will someday reach his way of life —just as some primitive cultures believe that acting out the effects that follow a cause will actually bring about the cause: wet yourself and it will rain. He still has the dangerous vision that guides his life the vision of the Land of Pelf, the long green, the crisp bills falling gently from the money trees like dead leaves; and meanwhile, even before he gets the doll-house, he is acting as though the vision were true. And

what he himself fails to spend, his wife takes care of. He is extended; in debt; juggling creditors; stretched thin; on a tightrope; near a breakdown. This is why he is unwilling to believe the unbelievable. This is why he is avid to accept a dubious gift from a dying man who is obviously his enemy. And this is why even a setback or two—plain warnings—do not deter him: he still has that dangerous vision of the perfect gimmick that will open the doors to the U.S. Mint.

"It is the custom of the gods," Caesar said to King Ariovistus, "to raise men high, so that their fall will be all the greater." Jim Eliot doesn't even get all that high, except for a matter of minutes; but his fall is just as great.

Most of my novels and short stories, I find, revolve a great deal around money, sex and status. This particular one is about money, and the various symbols that men exchange it for; about easy money and the eternally dangerous vision —that there is somewhere, just around the corner, in another country, another time, another dimension, a fool-proof way to get it.

SEX AND/OR MR. MORRISON

Introduction to

SEX AND OR MR. MORRISON:

No one writes like Carol Emshwiller. Absolutely no one. And no one ever *has*. She is her own woman, has her own voice, defies comparison, probes areas usually considered dangerous, and is as close to being the pure artist as any writer I have met.

It is difficult talking about Carol . . . even as it is difficult talking about her work. They don't align with the usual symbologies and standards. And Carol (to strangers) has trouble talking for herself. In sessions of critical analysis, she has a tendency to fall into gesticulation, murmurs, gropings for sound. This hesitancy does not show up in her stories. (It may be true that she must go through rewrites to find the language for a particular story, but that is *ex post facto*. The idea was there, it is merely the craft of the writer to accept and reject the various vibratory elements till the special harmony is achieved.) From this disparity, I draw a natural conclusion: Carol Emshwiller speaks most eloquently through her work. It is often so with the best writers. It is often so with the most special people.

As to her being a pure artist, she is the first writer I ever encountered who said she wrote to please herself whom I believed. The kinds of stories Carol brings forth are seldom commercial. They are quite frankly personal visions. (I have always contended that a writer must first learn the basics of his craft, the commercial manner of telling a story in its simplest, most direct ways, before attempting to break the rules and establish new approaches. Carol is, again, an exception to that rule. From the very first work of hers I read, she was an innovator, an experimenter. Either she knows the rules so well, inherently, that she can accept or reject them according to the needs of the project, or she is –as I suspect -

a natural talent that is not governed by the same rules as the rest of us. It's academic, really, for the proof is in the reading. She gets away with it every time.) Her "visions" are never completely substantial. They shift and waver, like oil rainbows in a pool. It is almost as if Carol's stories turn a corner into another dimension. Only a portion of the whole, intended work is visible. What she may *really* be saying is half glimpsed, shadowy, alluring, a beckoning from the mist. It isn't like the visible part of an iceberg, or the hidden meaning of a *haiku* or anything encountered previously. Once again, it is singular. But for want of a handier explanation, I'll stick with the turning-the-corner-to-another-dimension.

But being a "pure" artist is not merely a product of the *kind* of work one does. It is a state of mind, from the outset. And it is infinitely harder, by far, to hoe *that* row than simply to aspire to sell what one writes. Carol seems unconcerned about selling her stories—at least in the way most writers are concerned. She naturally wants the reality of seeing her work in print, but if that entails writing what she does not wish to write, she will pass. She has set herself a lofty reach of quality and attack that almost verges on the impossible. And she writes the stories full well aware that they may never sell. She is by no means an ivory tower writer, one who writes strictly for the trunk, one who is too insecure to release the work for public criticism. There is none of that in Carol. But she is cognizant of the facts of publishing life. There are too few magazines and editors who care to risk the experimental, the far out, the individual, when they can continue to make their sales break-even point with the hand-me-downs of antediluvian fantasy. None of this daunts Carol. She continues her own way, writing magnificently.

The genius of the Emshwiller talent (and I use the word "genius" with full awareness of every implication of its definition) is not confined to Carol, incidentally. As most people know, she is the wife of talented artist and film maker Ed Emshwiller, whose avant-garde films many of us have enjoyed for far longer than the teenie-boppers and under-

ground cinemaphiles who erroneously lump Ed in with Warhol and Brakhage and Anger and David Brooks. The Emshwiller genius -both husband and wife--is a combination of professional expertise sparingly employed in the forming of lean, moody and occasionally ominous art, both in fiction and in film. It would be a happy inevitability if Ed were to translate Carol's work for the screen.

In personally describing herself, Carol's image of the pertinent facts paint her as a Levittown housewife—three kids, bad housekeeper, can cook if she makes the effort and now and then she does—and I suspect the view is a cultivated one. Carol the housewife is someone Carol the writer is forced to keep split off. But beneath the superficialities there are some fascinating things to learn about the woman: "I once hated everything and anything to do with writing, though if I'd ever had anyone give me a little tiny hint as to what it was about, I think I'd have loved it as I do now. I nearly flunked freshman English in college and had to take an agonizing extra semester of English because of my bad grade. (I feel strongly about the lousy way things to do with literature are generally taught.) I started out in music school, playing the violin, and then switched to art school. I was a bad musician but a good artist. I met Ed in art school at the University of Michigan. I got a Fulbright to France. It wasn't until I'd met some writers, later, in New York, that I began to see what writing was all about. I see all the underground movies I can. I like interesting failures better than works where the artist always knows exactly what he's doing."

The story Carol tells here is by no means a failure. It is a complete success, easily the strangest sex story ever written, and functionally science fiction as well. It is considerably further out than the bulk of the stories Carol has had published in the commercial magazines, and is as close to being "the new thing" as anything in this book. I recommend it to younger writers breaking in, looking for new directions.

SEX AND/OR MR. MORRISON

by Carol Emshwiller

I can set my clock by Mr. Morrison's step upon the stairs, not that he is that accurate, but accurate enough for me. 8:30 thereabouts. (My clock runs fast anyway.) Each day he comes clumping down and I set it back ten minutes, or eight minutes or seven. I suppose I could just as well do it without him but it seems a shame to waste all that heavy treading and those puffs and sighs of expending energy on only getting downstairs, so I have timed my life to this morning beat. Funereal tempo, one might well call it, but it is funereal only because Mr. Morrison is fat and therefore slow. Actually he's a very nice man as men go. He always smiles.

I wait downstairs sometimes looking up and sometimes holding my alarm clock. I smile a smile I hope is not as wistful as his. Mr. Morrison's moonface has something of the Mona Lisa to it. Certainly he must have secrets.

"I'm setting my clock by you, Mr. M."

"Heh, heh . . . my, my," grunt, breath. "Well," heave the stomach to the right, "I hope . . ."

"Oh, you're on time enough for *me*."

"Heh, heh. Oh. Oh yes." The weight of the world is certainly upon him or perhaps he's crushed and flattened by a hundred miles of air. How many pounds per square inch weighing him down? He hasn't the inner energy to push back. All his muscles spread like jelly under his skin.

"No time to talk," he says. (He never has time.) Off he goes. I like him and his clipped little Boston accent, but I know he's too proud ever to be friendly. Proud is the wrong word, so is shy. Well, I'll leave it at that.

He turns back, pouting, and then winks at me as a kind of softening of it. Perhaps it's just a twitch. He thinks, if he thinks of me at all: What can she say and what can I say talking to her? What can she possibly know that I don't know already? And so he duck-walks, knock-kneed, out the door.

And now the day begins.

There are really quite a number of things that I can do. I often spend time in the park. Sometimes I rent a boat there and row myself about and feed the ducks. I love museums and there are all those free art galleries and there's window-shopping and, if I'm very careful with my budget, now and then I can squeeze in a matinee. But I don't like to be out after Mr. Morrison comes back. I wonder if he keeps his room locked while he's off at work?

His room is directly over mine and he's too big to be a quiet man. The house groans with him and settles when he steps out of bed. The floor creaks under his feet. Even the walls rustle and the wallpaper clicks its dried paste. But don't think I'm complaining of the noise. I keep track of him this way. Sometimes, here underneath, I ape his movements, bed to dresser, step, clump, dresser to closet and back again. I imagine him there, flat-footed. Imagine him. Just imagine those great legs sliding into pants, their godlike width (for no mere man could have legs like that), those Thor-legs into pants holes wide as caves. Imagine those two landscapes, sparsely fuzzed in a faint, wheat-colored brush finding their way blindly into the waist-wide skirt-things of brown wool that are still damp from yesterday. Ooo. Ugh. Up go the suspenders. I think I can hear him breathe from here.

I can comb my hair three times to his once and I can be out and waiting at the bottom step by the time he opens his door.

"I'm setting my clock by you, Mr. M."

"No time. No time. I'm off. Well . . ." and he shuts the front door so gently one would think he is afraid of his own fat hands.

And so, as I said, the day begins.

The question is (and perhaps it is the question for today): Who is he really, one of the Normals or one of the Others? It is not going to be so easy to find out with someone so fat. I wonder if I'm up to it. Still, I'm willing to go to certain lengths and I'm nimble yet. All that rowing and all that walking up and down and then, recently, I've spent all night

huddled under a bush in Central Park and twice I've crawled out on the fire escape and climbed to the roof and back again (but I haven't seen much and I can't be sure of the Others yet).

I don't think the closet will do because there's no keyhole, though I could open the door a crack and maybe wedge my shoe there. (It's double A.) He might not notice it. Or there's the bed to get under. While it's true that I am thin and small, almost child-sized, one might say, still it will not be so easy, but then neither has it been easy to look for lovers on the roof.

Sometimes I wish I were a little fast-moving lizard, dull green or a yellowish brown. I could scamper in under his stomach when he opened the door and he'd never see me, though his eyes are as quick as his feet are clumsy. Still I would be quicker. I would skitter off behind the bookcase or back of his desk or maybe even just lie very still in a corner, for surely he does not see the floor so much. His room is no larger than mine and his presence must fill it, or rather his stomach fills it and his giant legs. He sees the ceiling and the pictures on the wall, the surface of night table, desk and bureau, but the floor and the lower halves of everything would be safe for me. No, I won't even have to regret not being a lizard, except for getting in. But if he doesn't lock his room it will be no problem and I can spend all day scouting out my hiding places. I'd best take a snack with me too if I decide this is the night for it. No crackers and no nuts, but noiseless things like cheese and fig newtons.

It seems to me, now that I think about it, that I was rather saving Mr. Morrison for last, as a child saves the frosting of the cake to eat after the cake part is finished. But I see that I have been foolish, for, since he is really one of the most likely prospects, he should have been first.

And so today the day begins with a gathering of supplies and an exploratory trip upstairs.

The room is cluttered. There is no bookcase but there are books and magazines by the hundreds. I check behind the piles. I check the closet, full of drooping, giant suit coats I

can easily hide in. Just see how the shoulders extend over the ordinary hangers. I check under the bed and the kneehole of the desk. I squat under the night table. I nestle among the dirty shirts and socks tossed in the corner. Oh, it's better than Central Park for hiding places. I decide to use them all.

There's something very nice about being here, for I do like Mr. Morrison. Even just his size is comforting; he's big enough to be everybody's father. His room reassures with all his father-sized things in it. I feel lazy and young here.

I eat a few fig newtons while I sit on his shoes in the closet, soft, wide shoes with their edges all collapsed and all of them shaped more like cushions than shoes. Then I take a nap in the dirty shirts. It looks like fifteen or so but there are only seven and some socks. After that I hunch down in the kneehole of the desk, hugging my knees, and I wait and I begin to have doubts. That pendulous stomach, I can already tell, will be larger than all my expectations. There will certainly be nothing it cannot overshadow or conceal so why do I crouch here clicking my fingernails against the desk leg when I might be out feeding pigeons? Leave now, I tell myself. Are you actually going to spend the whole day, and maybe night too, cramped and confined in here? Yet haven't I done it plenty of times lately and always for nothing too? Why not one more try? For Mr. Morrison is surely the most promising of all. His eyes, the way the fat pushes up his cheeks under them, look almost Chinese. His nose is Roman and in an ordinary face it would be overpowering, but here it is lost. Dwarfed. "Save me," cries the nose, "I'm sinking." I would try, but I will have other more important duties, after Mr. Morrison comes back. Duty it is, too, for the good of all and I do mean *all*, but do not think that I am the least bit prejudiced in this.

You see, I did go to a matinee a few weeks ago. I saw the Royal Ballet dance "The Rites of Spring" and it occurred to me then . . . Well, what would *you* think if you saw them wearing their suits that were supposed to be bare skin? Naked suits, I called them. And all those well-dressed,

cultured people clapping at them, accepting even though they knew perfectly well . . . like a sort of Emperor's New Clothes in reverse. Now just think, there are only two sexes and everyone of us *is* one of those and certainly, presumably that is, knows something of the other. But then that may be where I have been making my mistake. You'd think . . . why, just what I *did* start thinking: that there must be Others among us.

But it is not out of fear or disgust that I am looking for them. I am open and unprejudiced. You can see that I am when I say that I've never seen (and doesn't this seem strange?) the very organs of my own conception, neither my father nor my mother. Goodness knows what *they* were and what this might make me?

So I wait here, tapping my toes inside my slippers and chewing hangnails off my fingers. I contemplate the unvarnished underside of the desk top. I ridge it with my thumbnail. I eat more cookies and think whether I should make his bed for him or not but decided not to. I suck my arm until it is red in the soft crook opposite the elbow. Time jerks ahead as slowly as a school clock, and I crawl across the floor and stretch out behind the books and magazines. I read first paragraphs of dozens of them. What with the dust back here and lying in the shirts and socks before, I'm getting a certain smell and a sort of gray, animal fuzz that makes me feel safer, as though I really did belong in this room and could actually creep around and not be noticed by Mr. Morrison at all except perhaps for a pat on the head as I pass him.

Thump . . . pause. Clump . . . pause. One can't miss his step. The house shouts his presence. The floors wake up squeaking and lean towards the stairway. The banister slides away from his slippery ham-hands. The wallpaper seems suddenly full of bugs. He must think: Well, this time she isn't peeking out of her doorway at me. A relief. I can concentrate completely on climbing up. Lift the legs against the pressure. Ooo. Ump. Pause and seem to be looking at the picture on the wall.

I skitter back under the desk.

It's strange that the first thing he does is to put his newspaper on the desk and sit down with his knees next to my nose, regular walls, furnaces of knees, exuding heat and dampness, throwing off a miasma delicately scented of wet wool and sweat. What a wide roundness they have to them, those knees. Mother's breasts pressing towards me. Probably as soft. Why can't I put my cheek against them? Observe how he can sit so still with no toe tapping, no rhythmic tensing of the thigh. He's not like the rest of us, but could a man like this do *little* things?'

How the circumstantial evidence piles up, but that is all I've had so far and it is time for something concrete. One thing, just one fact, is all I need.

He reads and adjusts the clothing at his crotch and reads again. He breaths out winds of sausages and garlic and I remember that it is after supper and I take out my cheese and eat it as slowly as possible in little rabbit bites. I make a little piece last a half an hour.

At last he goes down the hall to the bathroom and I shift back under the shirts and socks and stretch my legs. What if he undresses like my grandmother did, under a nightgown? under, for him, some giant, double-bed-sized thing?

But he doesn't. He hangs his coat on the little hanger and his tie on the closet doorknob. I receive his shirt and have to make myself another spy hole. Then off with the shoes, then socks. Off come the huge pants with slow, unseeing effort (he stares out the window). He begins on his yellowed undershorts, scratching himself first behind and starting earthquakes across his buttocks.

Where could he have bought those elephantine undershorts? In what store were they once folded on the shelf? In what factory did women sit at sewing machines and put out one after another after another of those otherwordly items? Mars? Venus? Saturn more likely. Or, perhaps, instead, a tiny place, some moon of Jupiter with less air per square inch upon the skin and less gravity, where Mr. Morrison can take the stairs three at a time and jump the

fences (for surely he's not particularly old) and dance all night with girls his own size.

He squints his oriental eyes towards the ceiling light and takes off the shorts, lets them fall loosely to the floor. I see Alleghenies of thigh and buttock. How does a man like that stand naked even before a small-sized mirror? I lose myself, hypnotized. Impossible to tell the color of his skin, just as it is with blue-gray eyes or the ocean. How tan, pink, olive and red and sometimes a bruised elephant-gray. His eyes must be used to multiplicities like this, and to plethoras, conglomerations, to an opulence of self, to an intemperant exuberance, to the universal, the astronomical.

I find myself completely tamed. I lie in my cocoon of shirts not even shivering. My eyes do not take in what they see. He is utterly beyond my comprehension. Can you imagine how thin my wrists must seem to him? He is thinking (if he thinks of me at all), he thinks: She might be from another world. How alien her ankles and leg bones. How her eyes do stand out. How green her complexion in the shadows at the edge of her face. (For I must admit that perhaps I may be as far along the scale at my end of humanity as he is at his.)

Suddenly I feel like singing. My breath purrs in my throat in hymns as slow as Mr. Morrison himself would sing. Can this be love, I wonder? My first *real* love? But haven't I always been passionately interested in people? Or rather in those who caught my fancy? But isn't this feeling different? Can love really have come to me this late in life? (La, la, lee la from whom all blessings flow.) I shut my eyes and duck my head into the shirts. I grin into the dirty socks. Can you imagine *him* making love to *me*!

Well below his abstracted, ceilingward gazes, I crawl on elbows and knees back behind the old books. A safer place to shake out the silliness. Why, I'm old enough for him to be (had I ever married) my youngest son of all. Yes if he were a son of mine, how he would have grown beyond me. I see that I cannot ever follow him (as with all sons). I must love him as a mouse might love the hand that cleans the cage, and as

uncomprehendingly too, for surely I see only a part of him here. I sense more. I sense deeper largenesses. I sense excesses of bulk I cannot yet imagine. Rounded afterimages linger on my eyeballs. There seems to be a mysterious darkness in the corners of the room and his shadow covers, at the same time, the window on one wall and the mirror on the other. Certainly he is like an iceberg, seven eighths submerged.

But now he has turned towards me. I peep from the books holding a magazine over my head as one does when it rains. I do so more to shield myself from too much of him all at once than to hide.

And there we are, confronting each other eye to eye. We stare and he cannot seem to comprehend me any more than I can comprehend him, and yet usually his mind is ahead of mine, jumping away on unfinished phrases. His eyes are not even wistful and not yet surprised. But his belly button, that is another story. Here is the eye of God at last. It nestles in a vast, bland sky Like a sun on the curve of the universe flashing me a wink of heat, a benign, fat wink. The stomach eye accepts and understands. The stomach eye recognizes me and looks at me as I've always wished to be looked at. (Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.) I see you now.

But I see him now. The skin hangs in loose, plastic folds just there, and there is a little copper-colored circle like a fifty-cent piece made out of pennies. There's a hole in the center and it is corroded green at the edges. This must be a kind of "naked suit" and whatever the sex organs may be, they are hidden behind this hot, pocked and pitted imitation skin.

I look up into those girlish eyes of his and they are as blank as though the eyeballs were all whites, as blank as having no sex at all, eggs without yolks, like being built like a boy-doll with a round hole for the water to empty out.

God, I think. I am not religious, but I think, My God, and then I stand up and somehow, in a limping run, I get out of there and down the stairs as though I fly. I slam the door of my room and slide in under my bed. The most obvious of

hiding places but after I am there I can't bear to move out. I lie and listen for his thunder on the stairs, the roar of his feet splintering the steps, his hand tossing away the banister.

I know what I'll say. "I accept. I accept," I'll say. "I will love, I love already, whatever you are."

I lie listening, watching the hanging edges of my bedspread in the absolute silence of the house. Can there be anyone here at all in such a strange quietness? Must I doubt even my own existence?

"Goodness knows," I'll say, "if I'm normal myself." (How is one to know such things when everything is hidden?) "Tell all of them that we accept. Tell them it's the naked suits that are ugly. Your dingles, your dangles, wrinkles, ruts, bumps and humps, we accept whatever there is. Your loops, strings, worms, buttons, figs, cherries, flower petals, your soft little toad-shapes, warty and greenish, your cats' tongues or rats' tails, your oysters, one-eyed between your legs, garter snakes, snails, we accept. We think the truth is lovable."

But what a long silence this is. Where is he? for he must (mustn't he?) come after me for what I saw. But where has he gone? Perhaps he thinks I've locked my door, but I haven't. I haven't.

Why doesn't he come?

Afterword:

Blake wrote: "The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion."

It would be nice to live in a society where the genitals were really considered Beauty. It seems to me any other way of seeing is obscene. After all, there they are. Why not like them? You can't have all this hiding and have people grow up not thinking there's a reason for hiding. (And when you think that every animal, or almost every animal, in the world had come into being from what we call a "dirty" word, it does seem a sick society.)

I wrote a series of stories on this theme. "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" really did come into my head while I was attend-

ing "The Rites of Spring" ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House. Not the sort of thing I usually do, by the way, but the tickets were gifts. The dancers wore "naked suits," skin-colored leotards with hand prints and striped in imitation body paint. Sitting there with all those mature-looking, married-looking people in the audience (each of them *was* one of the sexes and there are only two . . . for goodness' sake, only two!), I suddenly remembered that as a small child I really did feel people must be hiding themselves so carefully because they were each entirely different from one another. I figured there may be general male-female opposition, you know, males out, females in (though at that age I suppose I felt, males out, females nothing), but that was all the similarity there could be. And if people didn't wear clothes, I thought, what peculiar and wondrous things we'd see.

This all came back to me as I sat there at the ballet. It suddenly seemed very strange to have those naked suits on-stage, as though what I thought as a child was the only possible, logical explanation for all the hiding. Why else should adults, especially this audience, educated-looking and rather elderly, each one sex and looking married to the other, why should they have to see a program with pretend skin on the dancers? Ludicrous!

So, this story. . . .

SHALL THE DUST PRAISE THEE?

Introduction to

SHALL THE DUST PRAISE THEE?:

Somehow, inexplicably, I have grown rather fond of Damon Knight, 1st president and founder of the Science Fiction Writers of America. After thought, I must chalk it up to the fact that he is married to Kate Wilhelm, who is a better writer than I am, which offends me, but is one of those truths one must finally face up to. She is also lots prettier. Ergo, because Kate is a better writer than I, I recognize that she is a better person than I, and being a better person, there must be *something* she sees in Damon that makes him lovable and worth while, and out of respect and admiration for Kate, I have let it slop over onto Damon. A sticky and entirely unseemly situation, at best.

Now there are those who contend Damon Knight is worth while in his own right. As author of *Hell's Pavement* and *The Analogs* and *Mind Switch*, which many contend are brilliant novels of pure speculative fiction. As editor of *A Century of Science Fiction* and *Cities of Wonder* and *13 French Science Fiction Stories* and eleven other anthologies, touted as the peak of literacy in the genre. As critic of the scene, epitomized by his collection of essays, *In Search of Wonder*, which helped win him a Hugo in 1956 as Best Science Fiction Book Reviewer. All this is said in defense of Damon Knight. There may even be merit in it.

Yet if this be so, if Knight is indeed the paragon his fans would have us believe, then explain the following:

> Knight, sitting in a restaurant with friends, watching James Blish and myself at another table, as Blish explained in pantomime a hilarious newspaper cartoon to me, totally bewildered and bursting into tears when Blish

refused to explain the meaning of his bizarre hand movements. . . .

Knight, having incurred the wrath of a host of writers in attendance at the Milford (Pa) SF Writers Conference (of which he is the founder and director, since 1956), finding two fifteen-foot hardwood pilings inserted through front and back windows of his car, not uttering a word of anger or protest, but merely sulking for two days. . . .

Knight, managing not only to *sell* "The Man in the Jar" to a leading magazine, but having the audacity to include it in his latest collection, *Turning On*, without cleaning up the specious logic of the denouement. . . .

Knight, having a surfeit of brilliant Kate Wilhelm stories already bought up for his *Orbit* series of original science fiction anthologies, refusing to sell a perfect *gem* of a Kate story to this anthology, forcing the poor woman to sell it to *him* for some nebulous far-distant collection he is putting together. . . .

Each of these imponderables forces the conclusion that Damon Knight is a spoilsport. Now how's *that* for feet of clay!

Spoilsport was born in Baker, Oregon, in 1922. He was semi-educated in Hood River, Oregon, public schools. He spent a year after high school studying at the WPA Art Center in Salem, Oregon, then moved to New York and joined an early fraternity of science fiction buffs called The Futurians in 1941. He did some science fiction illustration (which he admits was bad), worked for Popular Publications as an assistant editor on their pulp magazines, and as a reader for the Scott Meredith Literary Agency. He has been a free-lance writer since 1950, pouting all the while.

His first story sale (a result of flagrant intimidation and temper tantrums) was to Donald Wollheim (now editor of Ace Books) at *Stirring Science Fiction* when he was eight-

een; since then he has sold close to a hundred stories, five novels, four collections of stories and the previously noted anthologies, et. al.

About this Damon Knight story: he sent it in despite the fact that I told him bluntly there was no place for *his* kind of fellow in such an august collection. I liked it well enough, but I was going to send it back, just to show him nobody likes a smartass, when I received a letter from Kate. She said he had been making her life a living hell. They live in "a large delicate Victorian mansion in Milford, with three active boys, three tomcats and an indeterminate number of tropical fish," and Damon was really taking it out on Kate because I'd asked *her* for a story, but not him, and he threatened her that if *his* story was rejected and *hers* sold, he would have her shanghaied onto a white slave boat sailing to Marrakech.

Needless to say, he got his way, as usual. Thus, you will find in this anthology one Damon Knight story, and none by Kate Wilhelm. We're taking this up at the next Inquisition of the Science Fiction Writers of America.

SHALL THE DUST PRAISE THEE?

by Damon Knight

The Day of Wrath arrived. The sky pealed with trumpets, agonized, summoning. Everywhere the dry rocks rose, groaning, and fell back in rubble. Then the sky split, and in the dazzle appeared a throne of white fire, in a rainbow that burned green.

Lightnings flickered away toward the horizons. Around the throne hovered seven majestic figures in white, with golden girdles across their paps; and each one carried in his gigantic hand a vial that smoked and fumed in the sky.

Out of the brightness in the throne came a voice: "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

And the first angel swooped down, and emptied his vial in a torrent of darkness that smoked away across the bare earth. And there was silence.

Then the second angel flew down to earth, and darted this way and that, with his vial unemptied: and at last turned back to the throne, calling, "Lord, mine is to be poured out upon the sea. But where is the sea?"

And again there was silence. For the dry, dusty rocks of the earth stretched away limitless under the sky; and where the oceans had been, there were only runneled caverns in the stone, as dry and empty as the rest.

The third angel called, "Lord, mine is for the rivers and fountains of waters."

Then the fourth angel called, "Lord, let me empty mine." And he poured out his vial upon the sun: and in an instant grew hot with a terrible radiance: and he soared back and forth letting fall his light upon the earth. After some time he faltered and turned back to the throne. And again there was silence.

Then out of the throne came a voice saying, "Let be."

Under the wide dome of heaven, no bird flew. No creature crawled or crept on the face of the earth; there was no tree, and no blade of grass.

The voice said, "This is the day appointed. Let us go down."

Then God walked on the earth, as in the old time. His form was like a moving pillar of smoke. And after Him trooped the seven white angels with their vials, murmuring. They were alone under the yellow-gray sky.

"They who are dead have escaped our wrath," said the Lord God Jehovah. "Nevertheless they shall not escape judgment." The dry valley in which they stood was the Garden of Eden, where the first man and the first woman had been given a fruit which they might not eat. To eastward was the pass through which the wretched pair had been driven into the wilderness. Some little distance to the west they saw the pitted crag of Mount Ararat, where the Ark had come to rest after a purifying Flood.

And God said in a great voice, "Let the book of life be opened; and let the dead rise up from their graves, and from the depths of the sea."

His voice echoed away under the sullen sky. And again the dry rocks heaved and fell back; but the dead did not appear. Only the dust swirled, as if it alone remained of all earth's billions, living and dead.

The first angel was holding a huge book open in his arms. When the silence had endured for some time, he shut the book, and in his face was fear; and the book vanished out of his hands.

The other angels were murmuring and sighing together. One said, "Lord, terrible is the sound of silence, when our ears should be filled with lamentations."

And God said, "This is the time appointed. Yet one day in heaven is a thousand years on earth. Gabriel, tell me, as men reckoned time, how many days have passed since the Day?"

The first angel opened a book and said, "Lord, as men reckoned time, one day has passed since the Day."

A shocked murmur went through the angels.

And turning from them, God said, "Only one day: a moment. And yet they do not rise."

The fifth angel moistened his lips and said, "Lord, are You not God? Shall any secrets be hid from the Maker of all things?"

"Peace!" said Jehovah, and thunders rumbled off toward the gloomy horizon. "In good season, I wilt cause these stones to bear witness. Come, let us walk further."

They wandered over the dry mountains and through the empty canyons of the sea. And God said, "Michael, you were set to watch over these people. What was the manner of their last days?"

They paused near the fissured cone of Vesuvius, which in an aeon of heavenly inattention had twice erupted, burying thousands alive.

The second angel answered, "Lord, when last I saw them, they were preparing a great war."

"Their iniquities were past belief," said Jehovah. "Which were the nations of those that prepared the war?"

The second angel answered, "Lord, they were called England and Russia and China and America."

"Let us go then to England."

Across the dry valley that had been the Channel, the island was a tableland of stone, crumbling and desolate. Everywhere the stones were brittle and without strength. And God grew wroth, and cried out, "Let the stones speak!"

Then the gray rocks fountained up into dust, uncovering caverns and tunnels, like the chambers of an empty anthill. And in some places bright metal gleamed, lying in skeins that were graceful but without design, as if the metal had melted and run like water.

The angels murmured; but God said, "Wait. This is not all."

He commanded again, "Speak!" And the rocks rose up once more, to lay bare a chamber that was deeper still. And in silence, God and the angels stood in a circle around the pit, and leaned down to see what shapes glittered there.

In the wall of that lowest chamber, someone had chiseled a row of letters. And when the machine in that chamber had been destroyed the fiery metal had sprayed out and filled the letters in the wall, so that they gleamed now like silver in the darkness.

And God read the words.

"WE WERE HERE. WHERE WERE YOU?

Afterword:

This story was written some years ago, and all I remember about it is that my then agent returned it with loathing, and told me I might possibly sell it to the *Atheist Journal* in Moscow, but nowhere else.

The question asked in the story is a frivolous one to me, because I do not believe in Jehovah, who strikes me as a most improbable person; but it seems to me that, for someone who does believe, it is an important question.

'A LANDMARK, A CLASSIC!'

Science Fiction Times

DANGEROUS VISIONS is the most dazzling science fiction anthology ever published. Between them, the stories it showcases have won two Hugo Awards, two Nebula Awards, two Hugo Award runner-up places and one Nebula Award runner-up position.

This second volume of the three-volume paperback edition of **DANGEROUS VISIONS** features brilliant stories by

PHILIP K. DICK
LARRY NIVEN
POUL ANDERSON
FRITZ LEIBER

and other top SF authors.

'The single best collection of science fiction stories ever compiled!'

Science Fiction Review

'Gigantic, exuberant, startling, vital, meaningful' Damon Knight

'There has never been a collection like this before' James Blish

Also in Sphere Science Fiction

DANGEROUS VISIONS 1
DANGEROUS VISIONS 3

0 7221 3298 0 SCIENCE FICTION

UNITED KINGDOM 95p · AUSTRALIA $2.95 · NEW ZEALAND $2.95 · EIRE £1.04½p · MALTA 95c

Australia recommended price only.